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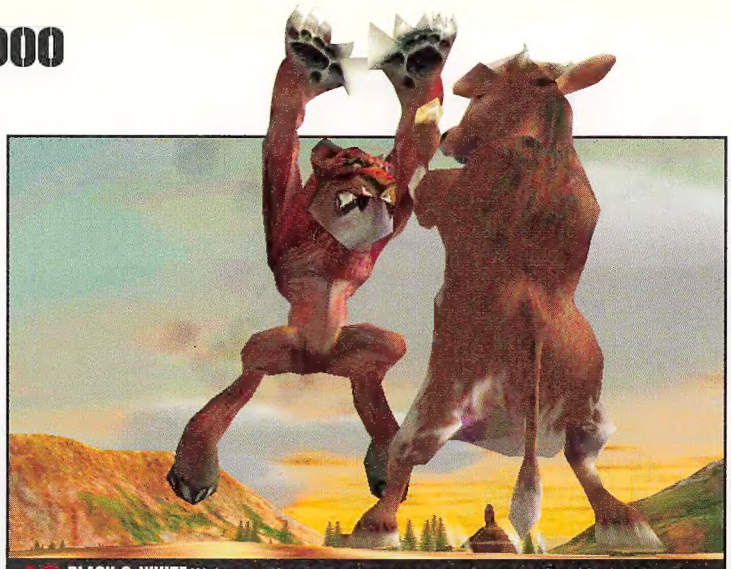
WIN THE TOP 10 PC GAMES
SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS PAGE 27



40 BLACK & WHITE We've got the scoop that everyone else was after. Lionhead's new game is an RPG! Check out the inside information and all the latest screenshots.

78 SWAT 3 We review the game that takes it to *Hidden & Dangerous*.

102 BELT UP! The driving supertest – which racer should you drive?

48 EURO LEAGUE FOOTBALL Action and management together at last.

46 SOLDIER OF FORTUNE No beardy-weirdy nonsense here. Ravensoft's new FPS is contemporary and as hard as they come. Check our preview.

44 FINAL FANTASY VIII The latest in a long line of sublime RPGs.

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Not everything in *Black & White* makes sense, but we spill the beans on Lionhead's exciting new RPG release

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Ravensoft drop the pointy hats and take shooters into the real world

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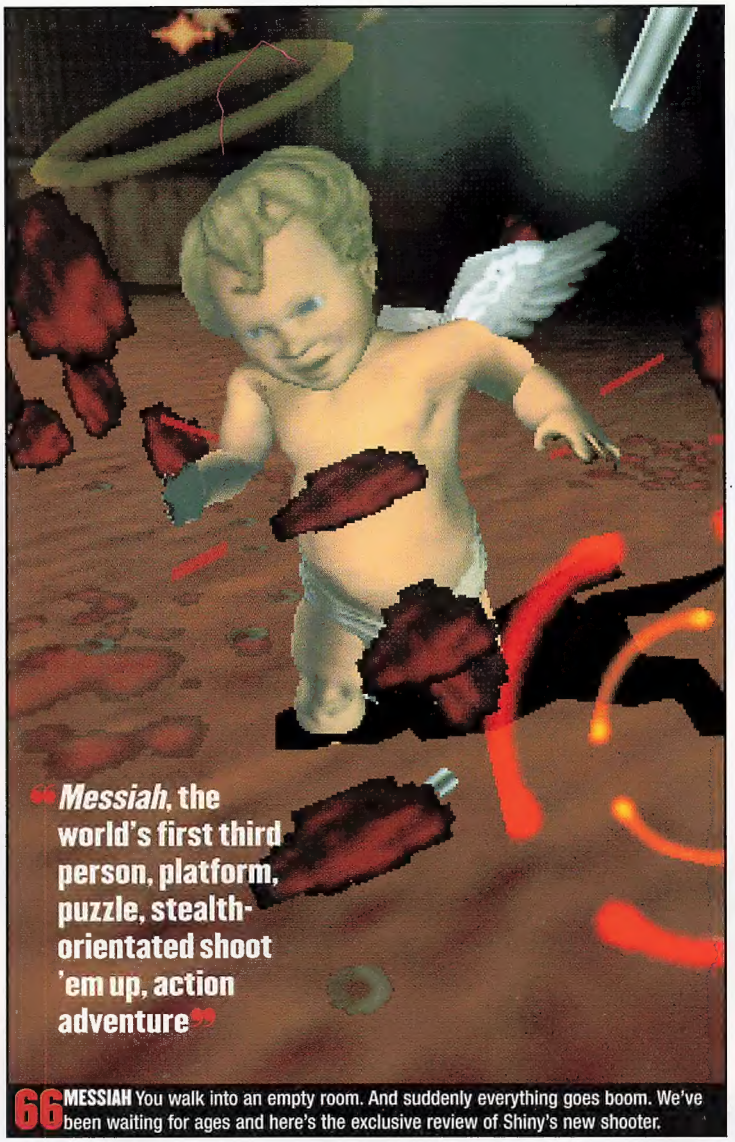
TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION
SPECIAL READERS' OFFER
SEE P.29

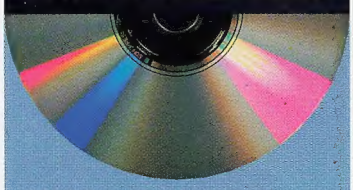


"*Messiah*, the world's first third person, platform, puzzle, stealth-orientated shoot 'em up, action adventure"

72 HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE The best game ever gets an update. Cool.

66 MESSIAH You walk into an empty room. And suddenly everything goes boom. We've been waiting for ages and here's the exclusive review of Shiny's new shooter.

ON THE CD



FULL DETAILS PAGE 150

That silvery thing on the cover is loaded with great demos, patches and helpful files guaranteed to ensure you get more out of your PC

DON'T MISS DEMOS OF...

MESSIAH
INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE
UNREAL TOURNAMENT
TA: KINGDOMS
FIFA 2000
AGE OF WONDERS
SID MEIR'S ALIEN CROSSFIRE
CLOSE COMBAT IV
FLANKER 2.0
PLUS

All the patches you need to bring your copy of *Half-Life* up to date, along with the latest patches for *Midtown Madness*, *Nocturne*, *Trickstyle*, *Wheel of Time* and much, much more.

Handy games utilities and more...

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Quite literally the most definitive games news section in the universe

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Gaming news from all over the planet. If it's worth knowing, we'll tell you

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Lots of stuff about stuff. Or something

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Got a gripe about a games publisher? Have a cry on Adam Phillips' shoulder

END ZONE

Just when you thought the mag had ended... blimey, a whole lot more!

158 THE WORLD ACCORDING TO...
The hat...the whip. It can only be one person. Read our exclusive interview with Hal Barwood, the man responsible for bringing Indy to the small screen

162 COMMENT
We've got some very disturbing news – computers are taking over the world. Mark Hill uncovers the sinister plot

You'll never have to clean Microsoft's new mouse – see page 113

WIN! **THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS** Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (85), *PC ZONE*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.** The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The Ed's decision is final. Closing date: Friday 14th January 2000. The winner of our Xmas (#84) cover compo was Sue Parnell from Peterborough, who wins something from the *ZONE* prizes cupboard for sending in the correct answer (Atlantis) to last month's little teaser.

Who better to make life and death decis

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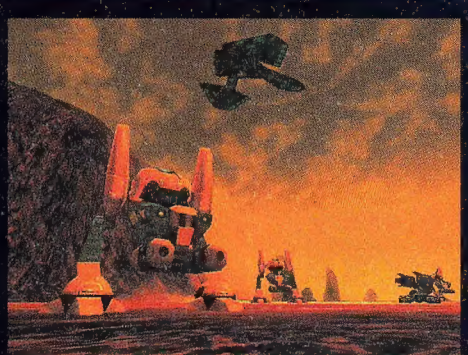

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"PC Gamer weeps tears of joy at the birth of a genre"
PC Gamer 93%
PCGAMER

PANDEMIC

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ALL CHANGE AT ZONE CENTRAL

This issue sees the introduction of our new Top 100. Apart from being the definitive buyers guide for PC gamers everywhere, it holds wider connotations for our scoring system in general. You will be able to see at a glance which titles are most worthy of your attention in each particular genre, but you will also notice significant changes from one month to the next as new games come in, others drop-out, and even entire genres are completely revalued once a new genre benchmark arrives on the scene. Benchmark games represent the definitive title in each genre, and we will be reviewing all new games against these titles. This effectively means that the Zone scoring system will now be a lot harsher than you may be used to. It will be *very* difficult for any game to achieve classic status under these conditions. Additionally, we will constantly monitor the top 100 and change scores to reflect how older games stand compared to newer competition. From our March issue (on sale 10th February) all major releases will be played by the entire Zone staff and scored by committee. We will also be giving alternative opinions in lead reviews in order to give you a more rounded impression of how the entire team reacts to major releases.

This will ensure that we all agree that any potential 'classics' will stand the test of time and fully deserve this coveted accolade, although you will still get the individual reviewers' impressions from the review text itself to get an actual feel of what the game is like over a long period of play.

We believe this new system will make it much easier for you to make a decision when deciding which new games to buy. It will be blatantly obvious which titles stand out a mile as essential purchases, and you will have an immediate and up to date point of reference for all the other top games available.

I welcome your comments on the new scoring system, and indeed anything else in PC Zone you would like to write to me about. Send your comments by email to chris.pcz@dial.pipex.com, or by post at the usual address.

Enjoy the issue, see you next month.

Chris Anderson, Editor

MEET THE ZONE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a reviewer who's a fan of the genre

CHRIS ANDERSON

Best game of 1999 and why.

Ultima Online, it's the most comprehensive and rewarding RPG I've ever played. Ever!

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Duke Nukem Forever. If it turns out to be *Duke 3D* in 'real' 3D it will be incredible.

DAVE WOODS

Best game of 1999 and why.

Unreal Tournament, it's the best first-person shooter.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Team Fortress 2.

RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Best game of 1999 and why.

I don't think it's been that great a year, but my favourites have been *Team Fortress Classic* and *X – Beyond The Frontier*.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

In no particular order: *Team Fortress 2*, *Sudden Strike*, *Halo*, *Freelancer* and Pompey reaching the Division 1 play-offs.

MARK HILL

Best game of 1999 and why.

System Shock 2 is the best but I'll be playing the latest *Champ Man* forever (or until the next one comes out).

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Duke Nukem Forever, *Voyager*, *Vampire* and *Obi Wan*.

PAUL MALLINSON

Best game of 1999 and why.

It has to be *System Shock 2* because it had my pulse racing more than any other game this year.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Being a big Jedi Knight fan I have to say *Obi Wan* (or whatever they end up calling it).

STEVE HILL

Best game of 1999 and why.

Championship Manager: Season 99/00. Because it's the only game I play for free.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Championship Manager: Season 00/01

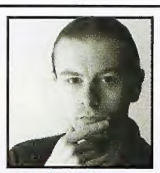
CHARLIE BROOKER

Best game of 1999 and why.

Quake III. It's Quake for chrisakes.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Team Fortress 2.



PAUL PRESLEY

Best game of 1999 and why.

Homeworld. Simply stunning.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Black & White or *Revolution*, if it comes out.

KEITH PULLIN

Best game of 1999 and why.

Championship Manager 3. I just can't stop playing it. My girlfriend seriously thinks I should seek professional help.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

That I somehow become bored of *CM3* and can once again enjoy a rich and bountiful life.

ADAM PHILLIPS

Best game of 1999 and why.

Hidden And Dangerous. It's a superb strategy/action game. Shame about all the bugs though.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

David Bowie retires. John Prescott is fired. And the obligatory hope for world peace etc. etc.

DAVID MCCANDLESS

Best game of 1999 and why.

Unreal Tournament. It kicks ass.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

Team Fortress 2.

PHIL WAND

Best game of 1999 and why.

Team Fortress Classic, because it still has a stranglehold on my free time. There simply is no better team based action game.

What is your brightest hope for 2000?

The new Triumph TT600. And of course *Team Fortress 2*.

PCZONE

DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD
19 BOLSOVER STREET
LONDON W1P 7HJ
TEL: 0171 631 1433
FAX: 0171 436 1321
EMAIL: letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.pczone.co.uk

RACING TOWARDS DEADLINE
Editor Chris Anderson 0171 917 3901
Deputy Editor Dave Woods 0171 917 3830
News Editor Richie Shoemaker 0171 917 5675
Staff Writer Mark Hill 0171 917 3864
Art Editor Phil Clark 0171 917 3911
Designers David McCormack, Tim MacDonald, Colin Macclesworth
Production Garth Sumpter, Amaya Lopez, Lynn Jones
Writers Simon Bradley, Charlie Brooker, David Stark, Steve Hill, Martin Korda, Paul Mallinson, David McCandless, Adam Phillips, Paul Presley, Keith Pullin, Carlos Rulz, Craig Vaughan, Phil Wand, Andrew Wright
EPU Manager Sarah Gilliver 0171 917 7715
CD Producer Alan Stonebridge 0171 917 7646
CD Editor Daniel Emery 0171 917 7689
Tips line Richard Crook 0171 917 7698
Origination Elements 0171 323 0022
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CRACKING THE WHIP
Publisher Helen Cribb 0171 917 5644
Editor-in-Chief Mark Higham 0171 917 7791
Group Publisher Tim Ponting 0171 917 7666
Consultant Creative Director Vici MacDonald
Advertisement Director Ian Westwood
Advertisement Manager Mandy Hewitt 0171 917 3873 adman.pczone@dennis.co.uk
Senior Sales Executive Richard Downey 0171 917 7708
New Media Sales Manager Pete Wootton 0171 917 7811
Production Manager Colin Robinson 0171 917 3937
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WIN! Who developed *MDK*? Send entries on the back of a postcard to: I've read the small print, *PC ZONE* (86), 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ by Friday 14 January. Winner and prize announced same place next issue. Paul Shotton from Longton in Stoke-on-Trent wins the *ZONE* grab bag of goodies from last month's compo for correctly finishing the name of the Lucas Arts title *The Day of the Tentacle* Well done, Paul.

TIPS LINE: 0171 917 7698
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SUBSCRIPTIONS HOTLINE:
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Make it your New Year resolution!

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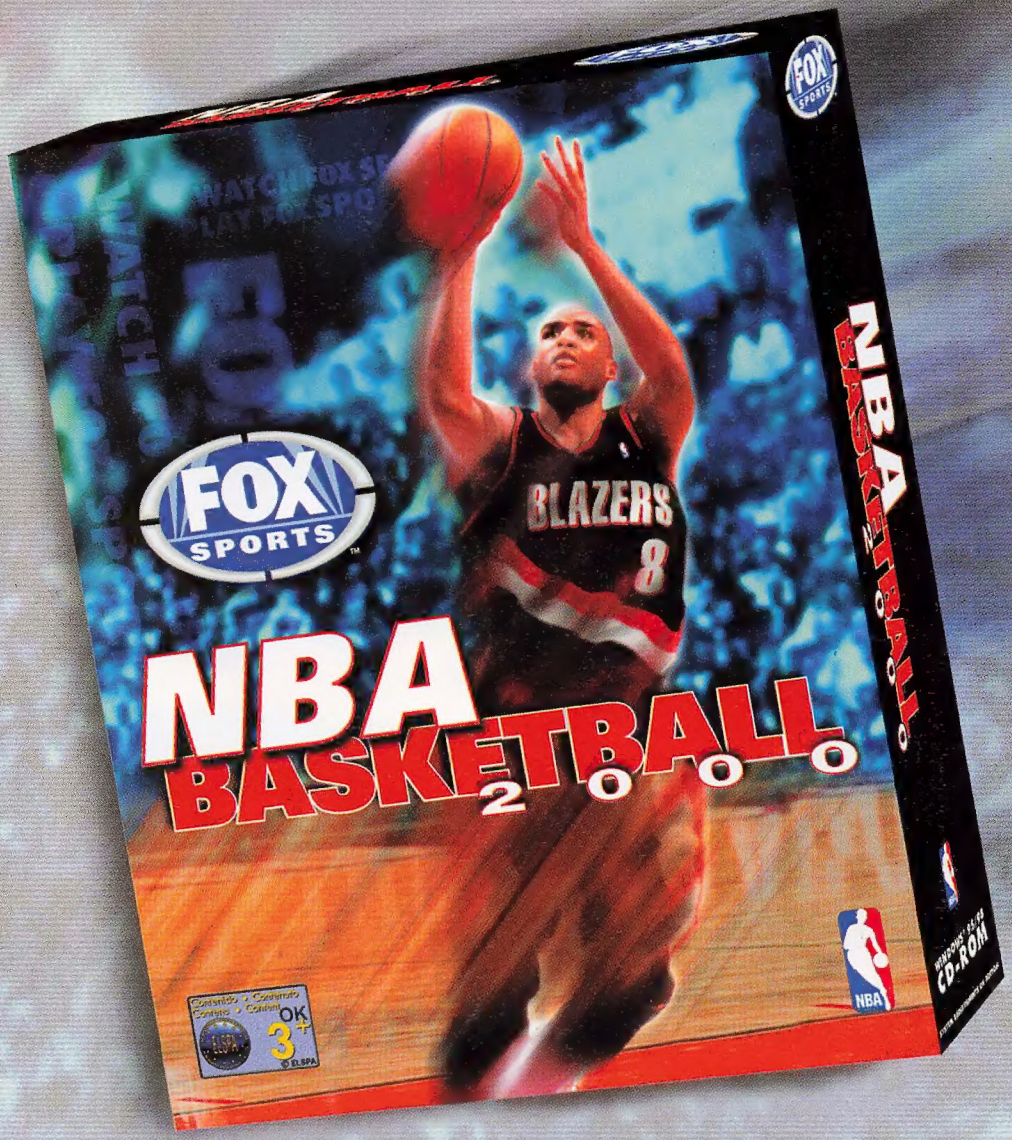

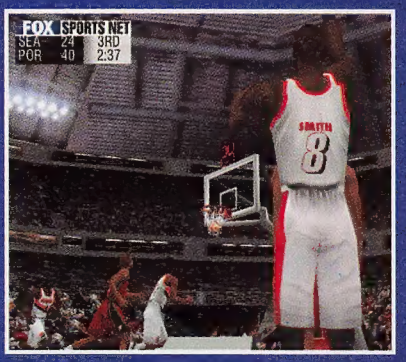

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PINNACLE

MAILBOX

Walk-throughs make games too easy claims one reader (funny that), another has spotted the similarity between Charlie Brooker and world cup hero Eusebio, and yet another launches an astonishing attack on the PlayStation. It's all happening in this month's wacky Mailbox.

ANSWERED BY Chris Anderson

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter of the Month we'll send you a prize.

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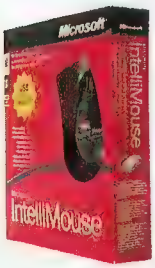
CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

"I know from bitter experience that a P166 is just not 'standard' enough to run most of today's new titles"

CHRIS GARLAND, THINKS OUR STANDARD PC IS OUT OF DATE

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

For the next two issues of *PC ZONE*, we will be giving away a Microsoft IntelliMouse to everyone who gets a letter printed in Mailbox. These digital rodents are perfect for 3D shooters and games that require a quick and precise response from your pointing device, and you can even use them with Windows 98 if you really want to. So get your writing skates on and send us your literary masterpieces. We promise not to be rude when we reply to them. Well, not much.



You too can own a Microsoft IntelliMouse. Simply send a vaguely intelligent/interesting letter to Mailbox and, if it gets printed, we'll send you one.

NICE AND EASY DOES IT?

For the past four or five months I have bought every issue of PC Zone and I consider it to be a great magazine. This month, I had nearly finished reading it when I came upon your walkthrough on page 130 #83. To my mind, walkthroughs ruin the fun and the tension of the game. Having had a walkthrough for *Tomb Raider III* I know that once you have completed the game (which takes about two hours with the walkthrough) the game is then worthless to you.

But what really got me writing this letter to you was the fact that you have *Kingpin* and *System-Shock 2* walkthroughs when both the games only came out last month – hardly enough time to get anywhere in the game when most of us have only just gone out and bought it.

Otherwise love your magazine and I intend to buy more issues.

Richard Gardner

Hey Richard, you don't have to read them. They are there for people who are stuck or don't have enough time on their hands to play these games all the way through. You, on the other hand, will be able to hold your head high having completed these games alone without any help from us. Hurrah.

HELP! I NEED SOMEBODY

PCs go wrong. It's a fact of life. We've all sat in front of our computers, head in hands, cursing the day Bill Gates was born. And who can you turn to in your hour of need? ...Customer Support Helplines.

I can tell what you're thinking. "Oh no, not another guy complaining about lack of support – why isn't he contacting Watchdog"? Well I'm actually writing to say a big thank-you to the guys that sit by the telephone, for up to 24 hours a day, to try and help us. Admittedly, we've all had some patronising helpdesk operative keep telling us to get the latest driver off his website. But I've also however, talked to some very helpful people whose knowledgeable suggestions have solved my every computing nightmare.

Thanks to you all,

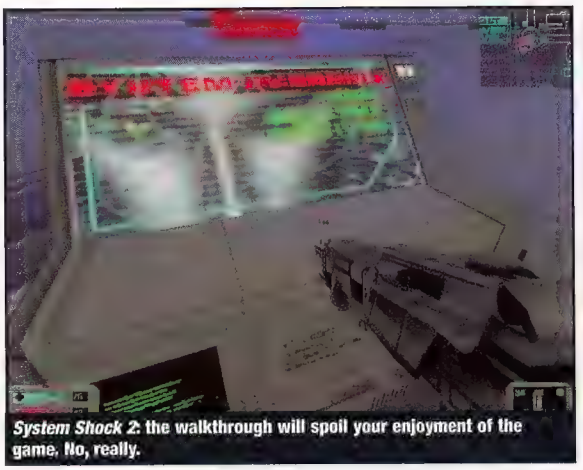
Jason Green

SPOT ON

What really annoys me is the number of people who complain to me that their favourite games should receive 99% in your magazine. I would like to congratulate you on not caving in to these people otherwise the 0-100% scale would mean nothing. Anyway, how much do these scores affect the quality of the game for these people? Surely if they like the game then a review shouldn't concern them.

Michael Chan

Quite.



***System Shock 2*: the walkthrough will spoil your enjoyment of the game. No, really.**

Chances are you will not be playing *Quake III* on a P166 (no kidding: a reader).

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Are games requiring ninja PC to run, the only type of game being released now?

At the start of your reviews section you quote the standard specification for today's PCs as a P166 with 32MB of memory, with no mention of a 3D card. This, incidentally, has been the minimum spec quoted in your reviews section for at least the past year, maybe more. (January 1999 happening to be the oldest back issue I have to hand.) I have a PC of those exact 'standard specs', and I know from bitter experience that a P166 is just not 'standard' enough to run most of today's new titles. Oh how the tears welled in my eyes as I learned that titles such as *Quake 3: Arena* will be unavailable to me to play on my aging dinosaur of a PC!

When will games developers and magazines realise that not every gamer is the proud owner of a top of the range Pentium III beast of a machine? Surely developers aren't that lazy in their programming that massively inflated minimum specs are essential to the gameplay in their latest multi-million pound programming "masterpiece"? There's been many times when I have happily purchased a new game, reassured by the hopeful system specs on the fancy box, only to discover that I've paid £34.99 for a slideshow! Unreal? Those system specs on the box sure are Unreal.....

Chris Garland.

Chris, we sympathise with your plight, but the sad fact is that your system will not produce the goods for the majority of new titles. We have been discussing this in the office, and have upped our recommended *minimum* specs to a P233, but we fear that even this may not be enough to run new games soon, even at low resolutions with low detail settings. If you are thinking of taking the plunge and upgrading your

Games
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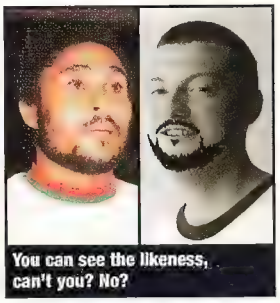
PC anytime soon, a Pentium 3 would appear to be the only sensible choice.

3D IN OLD HAT SHOCKER

I would like to say that PC Zone is the most skillfully crafted and informative games journal available to buy on the shelves, with Charlie Brooker in particular proving to be the 'Eusebio' of games journalism. So there. I've said it. But the point of this missive is not to heap deserved praise on your fine magazine but to draw attention to the creeping malaise that is affecting the current crop of 3D cards, a sickness which some techheads are calling 'Domestic Appliance Syndrome'. Yes, it would seem that the days of true innovation in the field of hardware acceleration are over – MIP mapping, lens flare, Gouraud shading – we've seen it all before, who cares if the new cards do it twice as fast – isn't that what I upgrade my CPU for? Speaking as someone who has just bought one of the latest 3D cards, there really doesn't seem to be that much of an improvement over the card I bought two years ago, and I bet that it won't be too long before consumers start



You can see the likeness, can't you? No?

to voice their discontent by refusing to open their wallets. The 3D card companies will then be forced to change their marketing tactics – all new 3D Spankovision card with built in TV tuner and Washing machine, anyone?

Derek Forrester

Come on Derek – apart from the increased frame-rate you get from the latest cards, you really want us to play games in 640 by 480 with 16bit colour forever? The new generation of 3D cards support high resolutions and 32bit colour, and new games look all the better for it.

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

Having read the letter from Scot Reid, regarding people who buy PCs and don't actually know what they're buying (Mailbox, Issue #83), I felt I would reply and offer the flip side of the coin. Mr. Reid states that his customers haven't heard of DOS and know nothing of the processor speed or graphics cards their new machine boasts. I don't think I'm entirely wrong in assuming that this is something that should have been explained to the customer by the salesperson BEFORE the computer was bought. You can't expect prospective PC owners to know all about computers but if a salesperson can't explain things, then they are not in the right job.

Mr. Reid may disagree, but in my experience in buying computers, salesmen are always more interested in offloading any PC onto you rather than offloading the *RIGHT* PC onto you. I don't expect salesmen to explain minutest workings of the PC, but if a customer wants a machine to play games more than anything else, then is it so much of a chore to explain in Laymen's terms, what they need to know about DOS, processor speed, graphics, sound cards, video cards etc?

I get Mr. Reid's point about people spending so much money on something they know nothing about, but the fact is there are loads of people out there who will always assume that computers are simply boxes that do clever things. I was a salesmen ages ago and I had to explain how certain televisions worked, for crying out loud.

The majority of people don't understand how complex computers are and they never will. Asking these people to read up on PCs before buying is like asking them to go back to school. They won't.

Computers are complex, Mr. Reid, and your customers don't know anything about them. What are YOU going to do about it?

Kevin Dellaquaglia.

It is not Scot Reids's job to do anything about it. He is a sales assistant.people ask him if new games will work with their machines *after* they've bought their hardware. Your point that PC salesmen could make more of an effort to ensure their customers walk out of their shops with what they need is a valid one. But how can you say asking people to read up on PCs before buying them is wrong? You say they won't do it. I say fine, but nobody will listen to them when they complain their new PC is not what they wanted if they couldn't be bothered to do a little research into it first. There are several high quality PC magazines available in the UK that run regular features on this sort of thing. Just as it makes sense to read PC Zone before spending your money on a new game, it also makes sense to check out a leading PC hardware mag before spending a not inconsiderable sum either buying a new PC or upgrading an existing one.

> **"Salesmen are always more interested in offloading any PC onto you"**
>
> KEVIN DELLAQIAGLIA, SHOUTS "BUYER BEWARE"

OH REALLY

Games such as *Half-Life* and *Tomb-Raider* are excellent examples of the action genre, but they have one major problem: the amount of bullets/ammo it takes to kill an enemy. In real life it take one (at most two) bullets from a gun to kill a person; in games such as Half-Life it can take as much as six bullets to the chest of a soldier before he goes down. In *Tomb-Raider* it takes far too many bullets to kill an animal or enemy, whereas they can kill you with one or two.

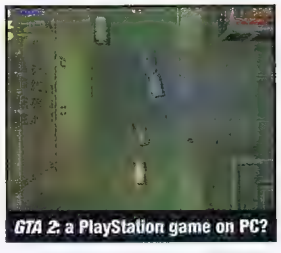
Developers may say that this adds to the game's difficulty thus increasing its longevity, but personally I'd rather take on 20 soldiers who take one bullet to kill than three soldiers who take six bullets to kill – this would make the game just as hard but much more realistic. If developers want realism in their games, surely they should allow for this?

Mark Robinson,

So you want to take on 20 guys at once and kill them with one bullet each for extra realism? Fine. Meanwhile your health bar decreases slightly as you take bullet after bullet in the head. Get our point? Games like this are geared towards exciting gameplay not realism. Let's hope they stay that way.

PSX GIVES HIM NIGHTMARES

I've noticed lately that some supposedly ground-breaking new games of each genre have been quite a let down. The latest example to date is the sequel to the ever-popular *GTA*. My hypothesis is that one thing is responsible for such travesties and it lurks in many homes of mortals who were stupid enough to buy it. It mocks PC players with its smiley circular grin and soulless plastic shell. I am referring to the cheap, grey Sony Playstation. This dated machine has gripped the hearts of the nation to the extent that most homes now own one. The talented Charlie Brooker mirrors my grievances when writing his *GTA 2* review: "That bloody machine's a curse,we tell you. Developers seem increasingly loath to include anything they won't also be able to squeeze into the PSX version – and that's why we're saddled with games that, although being fun to play, don't quite satisfy as much as they could because their growth has been stunted by that bloody grey box thing."



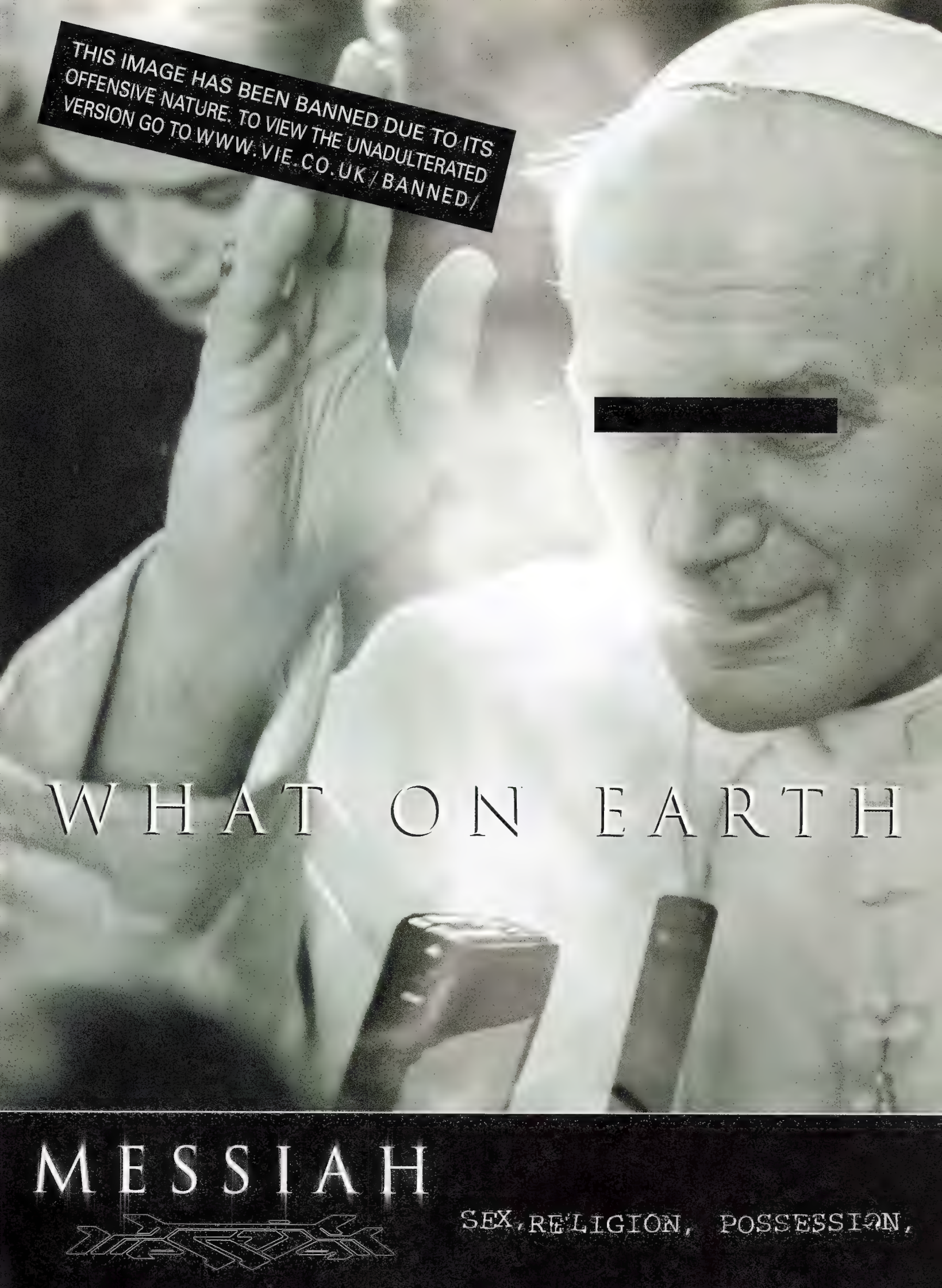
GTA 2: a PlayStation game on PC?

It's a farce I tell you! We are PC gamers damnit and had the sense to buy a far superior piece of hardware and I will not stand for badly ported PSX games or new games that have been cut down to size (presumably to fit a PSX CD) and are quite frankly rubbish. I am a proud PC owner and therefore demand PC quality games. I apologise for having such a long gripe but I refuse to see the PC gaming industry curtailed by the inferior console market.

Kandyman

Hey calm down a little. *GTA 2* is no classic and suffers from having been developed with PSX in mind, but it's not rubbish. And the PC gaming industry will not be 'curtailed' as a result of direct Playstation ports. If anything, shoddy PSX conversions serve as a timely reminder that the PC is the greatest games platform on Earth. Feeling better now? Good. PCZ

Tomb Raider is not realistic, says Mark Robinson. He might be right.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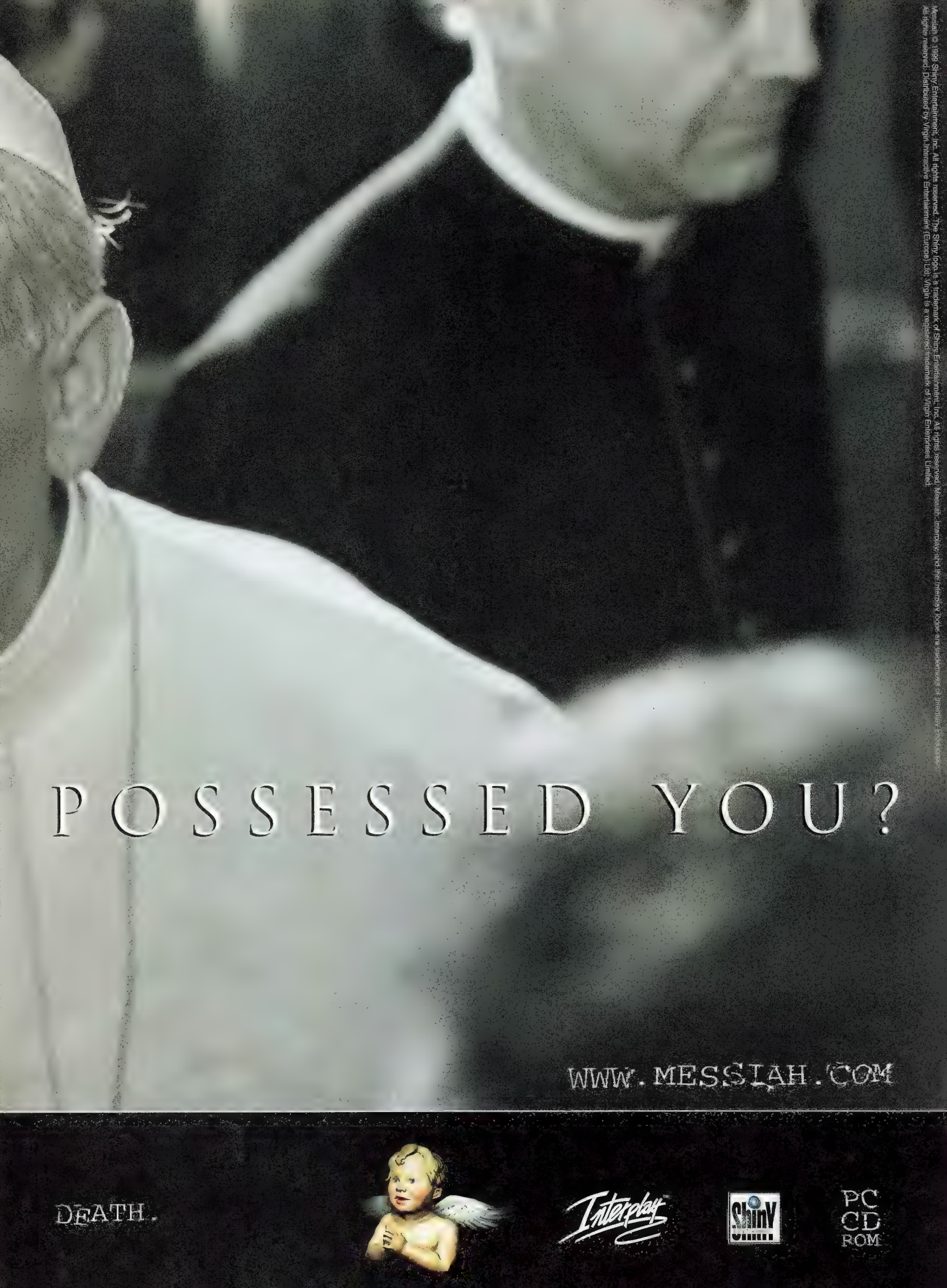
WHAT ON EARTH
MESSIAH
SEX, RELIGION, POSSESSION.



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TOP STORY

If that statue moves again I'm legging it.

IT'S TIME FOR DOUBLE-DAMAGE...

BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN

Oh yes indeedy. If you thought the original was deep, then prepare yourself for the most immersive RPG ever

ROLLING THE DICE Dave Woods

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

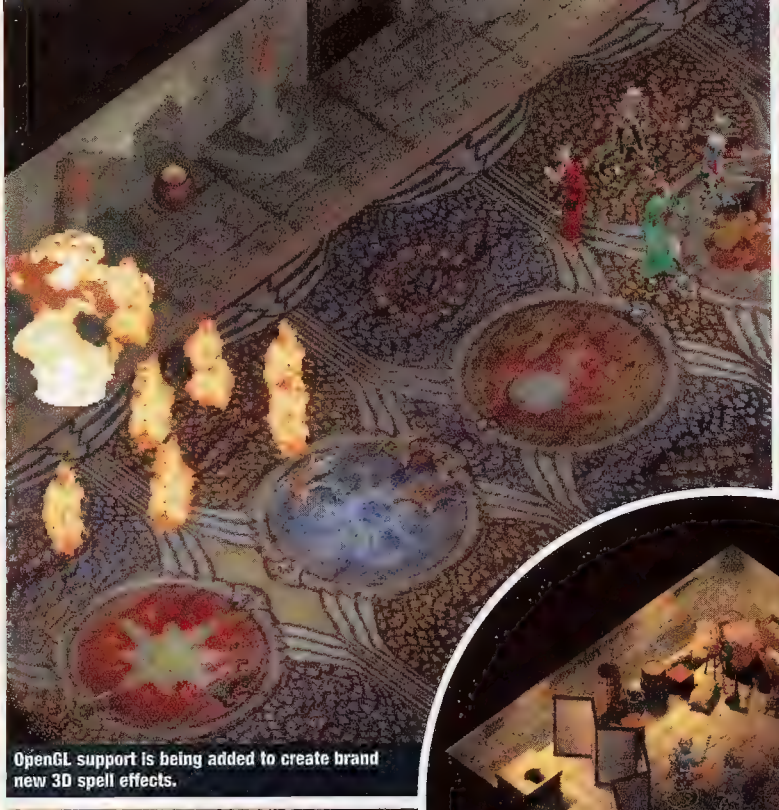
DEVELOPER BioWare
PUBLISHER Interplay
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Autumn 2000
WEBSITE www.interplay.com/bgate2

IN SUMMARY

Turn-based D&D and real-time PC action meet up for a reunion along the south side of the Sword Coast in the merchant kingdom of Amn.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

If you're into D&D, this is going to be the most faithful adaptation ever. Immersive storyline and unparalleled character interaction promise to give you the freedom to live the game the way you want.



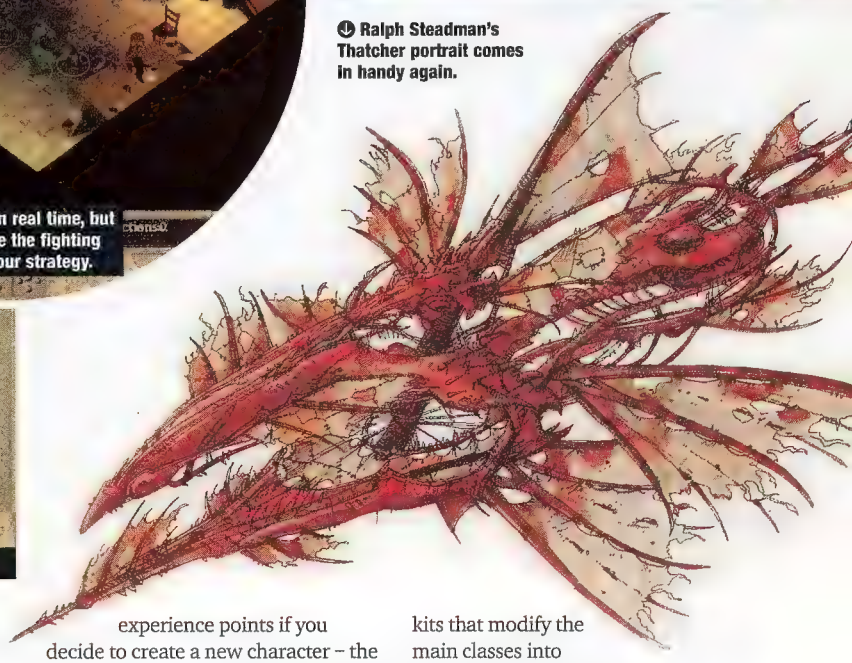
OpenGL support is being added to create brand new 3D spell effects.

The action's in real time, but you can pause the fighting and ponder your strategy.

You look like you've seen a panther.

Bigger monsters and better animation, although the game is still 2D.

Ralph Steadman's Thatcher portrait comes in handy again.



Small boys shoehorned into a bedroom, casting multi-sided dice and shouting "20 double-damage!" Parents forced to cast a summon spell to get them down for dinner, while dreaming of higher magic that can force their pasty-faced offspring into the sun. It doesn't sound like the ideal conversion for a PC game, but *Baldur's Gate* took the rigid turn-based Advanced Dungeons & Dragons rule-book and ripped it into one of the best RPGs your computer has ever seen.

BioWare, Canadian developers and self-confessed D&D devotees, were hoping that *BG* would shift 200,000 copies so they could justify work on the sequel. This happened, about five times over actually, and at short notice we were whisked across the Atlantic to feast our eyes on *Shadows Of Amn*, the full-blown successor to the RPG crown.

BG II is going to use the same Infinity engine, but the resolution has been upped to 800x600 and OpenGL support is being implemented to buff the edges. Most of the hardware-only effects are still being coded, but already the level of detail blows *BG* away. It's also sticking to the Second Edition rules. The next rulebook is due out around the same time as the game (next September), and BioWare have said they might implement some of the new features, but there isn't enough time to make a complete switch.

"Each character in *BGII* is going to have more scripting than all the characters in the original put together and more than double the amount of monsters"

Instead BioWare are building on everything that made the original special. Their aim is to increase the depth of play and build up the storyline to rival the *Final Fantasy* series. In keeping with the character-rich tradition, you can import existing profiles from *BG* or *Swords Of The Coast*. To ensure a balance for *Baldur* virgins, you're awarded 89,000 experience points if you decide to create a new character – the amount you should have amassed if you were a good boy or girl in the original.

Up to 15 new NPC characters can join your party, and each one has been dosed-up with personality in order to recreate a traditional role-playing group. Betrayals and romantic interludes are going to help drive the storyline, and the way you interact will have a huge bearing on the way the game plays. To give you an idea, each character in *BGII* is going to have more scripting than all the characters in the original put together.

What else can you expect to see? More than double the amount of monsters with better animation and more personality. An extra race, the half-orc, along with 20 new character kits that modify the main classes into speciality clerics, assassins and the like. There'll also be 130 extra spells, including the most powerful 9th level mage variety, and new items like the Holy Avenger and Staff of the Magi. Take your character up to the sacred 9th level and you'll be awarded a stronghold to run and protect. Multiplayer is still being worked on, but all the niggles from the first (such as accessing the stores and dead-time dialogue) are being eradicated so the experience should be a lot smoother.

The rest is classified for now, although we gleaned there may be multiple endings and the appearance of an exciting new monster. The only other titbit we managed to get was that the main players in *BG* are based on real-life D&D characters that BioWare have nurtured over the years. No surprise there, but another pointer towards the one ingredient that's going to ensure the sequel surpasses the original: passion. Pure and simple. PCZ

TOP STORY

Powersliding takes practice.

BE AMAZED, BE VERY AMAZED. IT'S.....

RALLY RACING SIMULATION

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft Entertainment
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft Entertainment
WEBSITE www.ubisoft.co.uk
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE March 2000

IN SUMMARY

It's a full-on simulation that recreates all 18 stages (and 360km) of the prestigious and demanding South of France rally.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It boasts astonishing visuals and intuitive handling. There's a mass of diverse cars on offer and they all crumple and deteriorate superbly.

Our French cousins at Ubi Soft are about to dish up some astonishing looking rally action

GOBSMACKED Craig Vaughan

The unpredictable French weather causes problems.

The static cameras offer spectacular replays.

Low-spec gamers need not apply.

The graphics are almost photo-realistic.

By now you've already admired the screenshots. Impressive, aren't they? More so when you consider that they're not taken from a Full Motion Video introduction and they're not 'mock-ups' either. So it's safe to say that the drably titled *Rally Racing Simulation* will look superb when it arrives early next year. With stiff competition ahead from Sega's Dreamcast and Sony's PlayStation 2, it's good to see that the continued evolution of PC graphics is apparent throughout this title. That's unsurprising though, because it's brought to us by the same code shop that spawned the gorgeous looking *F1 Racing Simulation* (*PCZ* #67, 93%) and *Monaco Grand Prix 2* (*PCZ* #69, 92%). But, as mouth-watering as these still shots are, they fail to portray the stunning dynamic lighting and shadowing effects that look set to take PC graphics to the next level. Making use of the latest 3D tools, Ubi Soft have manipulated in excess of 700 photographs and over 18 hours of video footage taken from the locations within the South of France rally on which this simulation is based. Gripped by the scale of the challenge, they've scrutinised topographical maps to achieve the 'correct lie of the land' – and they've faithfully recreated dozens of prominent landmarks too.

Amazingly though, the graphics aren't the game's main strength. Attempting to appeal to fans of the previously unsurpassable *Colin McRae Rally* (*PCZ* #68, 93%), Ubi Soft have added what gaming folk have been gagging for since the ageing *Destruction Derby 2* (*PCZ* #46, 86%) – cars that fold. We're not talking the odd dent here or a scrape of paint there, but rather the type of metal-mashing mayhem that the unwitting stars of *Police, Camera, Action* would be proud of. Far from being gratuitous, though, the damage is always appropriate to the action. For instance, suffer a 20mph fender-bender and your radiator will leak, causing a loss of engine performance; mangle a tree or other similar roadside object at high speed and – if you survive – you'll find yourself limping round the course, minus one or more of 30 detachable car parts.

"We're not talking the odd dent or scrape of paint, but the type of metal-mashing mayhem that the unwitting stars of *Police, Camera, Action* would be proud of"

Graphics aside, it's clear that the emphasis is on creating an authentic simulation – a quick look under the bonnet proving that Ubi Soft have obsessed over the garage-based antics on offer. All 30 of the selectable cars have hundreds of performance characteristics that affect their behaviour. So, although tinkering with sprockets and gear ratios will keep tech-heads happy, rally newbies will be delighted to hear that minor adjustments will have little perceivable impact on the racing action. Nonetheless, rookies shouldn't expect the sort of arcade-like powersliding that made *Sega Rally 2* so accessible, and they'll need to rely heavily on the verbose co-pilot and trusty handbrake in order to get to grips with the *Toca*-style handling. Nearing completion, coding is now in overdrive, with new weather effects and 3D trickery being added on a daily basis. Clearly aware that the PC market is awash with similar titles, Ubi Soft are striving to make the problem of choice academic, and from what we've seen they're way ahead of the chasing pack with the chequered flag already in sight. PCZ

Internet a

through

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FREE AT LAST

NEWS EDITOR Richie Shoemaker

Since first clapping eyes on it I've been wanting to spill the beans on *Freelancer*. Though there has been plenty to say, until now there has been nothing to show. Screenshots from Digital Anvil's epic have been impossible to come by. Now it seems, with still about a year to run until the games release, Microsoft – the games publisher, think the time is right to let slip.

Back in May at E3, sat in a darkened room and hidden away from the maddening crowds that packed the entire LA Conference Centre, I was flanked by a select few of the worlds gaming press. On the screen in front of us was a PC (a P266 with 64MB RAM if I remember), unknowingly waiting to blow us all away.

Between being seated and leaving in stunned silence somewhere between five minutes and one hour had passed, during which time I had to repeatedly reclaim my jaw from the carpet, the drool from my chin and my eyes from the monitor at the front of the room.

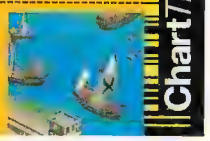
Not only was *Freelancer* the most visually impressive game at the show, it was probably the most ambitious. One scene that particularly stuck in the mind was one in which two of the games characters conducted a conversation. What they said has long since been forgotten, but it was how they interacted that impressed me most. The skeletal animation, the gesturing and the lip-synching that not only showed moving lips, but the teeth behind them. All this remember, was seven months ago. How far *Freelancer* has come since then is anyone's guess, but don't be too surprised if you see advanced tooth decay and little bits of cabbage swimming around in micropools of saliva when the game come out.

Anyway that's the beans well and truly spilt. In the meantime there are plenty of other, more imminent games to look forward to before Freelancer arrives if you care to read on. Enjoy.

THE PCZONE CHARTS

What's in, out, up and down

P.27



TECH-HEAD

Does Microsoft new box of tricks mean an end to PC gaming?

P.31

The jury is still out on Ultima Ascension.

ULTIMA IX CAUSES UPROAR IN THE US

Ultima Ascension has just gone on sale in the US and many impulse buyers have expressed dissatisfaction with the product. Gameplay issues have been swept aside amidst claims of game-stopping bugs, broken quests and most notably, very poor frame-rates even on very high-end machines. Origin claim that U9 was designed for Glide (3dfx) from the ground up. This would appear to account for users' reports of abysmal performance under Direct3D: owners of TNT, TNT2 and GeForce cards have experienced poorer frame-rates than owners of inferior 3dfx-based cards such as Voodoo 2 and 3.

In the meantime Origin have issued a statement recognising the bugs and they say there will be a patch for the game soon. Unfortunately, the D3D problem will not be addressed in the first patch. Origin say they want to get as much feedback from the U9 community as possible in order to correctly address the problem.

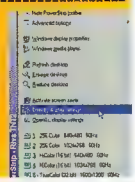
We will make no comment as to the merits of the US boxed version of Ultima Ascension, although we have to admit that the preview silver disc version we received suffered from all the problems reported in the US version. Our hopes are not high that Origin can produce a 'miracle' patch in time for the boxed UK version, but we can only advise you not to buy the game immediately but to wait for our full review of the finished game in our next issue (on sale 13th January).

Let's hope for all our sakes that these problems are resolved when the game finally hits the streets over here, and we can all enjoy what we are fully expecting to be a spectacular end to the greatest roleplaying series of all time. Watch this space.

If only it looked this good on all PCs.

Something isn't right in the once tranquil land of Britannia.

ONLINE DIARY
Tweak your PC to within an inch of its processing speed
P32



MAN WHO KNOWS
The very latest industry gossip
P34

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO....?
Three games that should've been here by now
P35

HOTSHOTS
Big games and even bigger pictures
P36

FREELANCER

Chris Roberts' space epic unveiled

Responsible for *Strike Commander*, four *Wing Commander* games and another four spin-off titles (*Privateer 2* being the best), Digital Anvil's Chris Roberts has become to space-combat games what John Carmack is to first-person action. Previously at Origin, he more than any other games designer has shaped the genre as it stands today, transforming its cult status image into mass-market acceptance,

With the *Wing Commander* saga now essentially over, on PC at least, Roberts has begun afresh on not one, but two new space games. The first next spring, is the mission-based *Starlancer*. The second and far more ambitious game, is *Freelancer*.

Little has been seen or heard of *Freelancer*, but like most cutting-edge games, little ever is. However, from a couple of brief encounters with early code in darkened rooms earlier in the year, we reckon Freelancer is going to be one of the few must-have games of Y2K, or Y2K+1 if it (inevitably) slips. And now screenshots have started appearing, we can all see why.

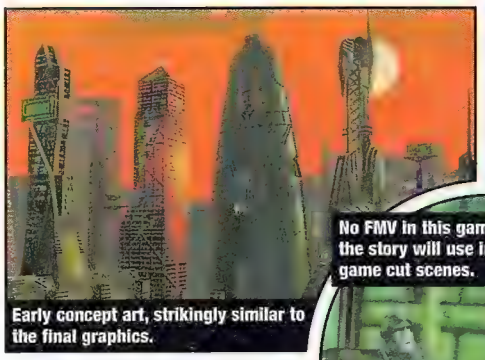
Rather than continue the mission-based script set out in *Starlancer*, *Freelancer*, as its name suggests is a lot more freeform in nature. Comparisons with *Elite* and *Privateer 2* are obvious, however *Freelancer* will have a lot more in common with traditional troll-infested RPGs, with skills available to buy, steal or upgrade.

You start, predictably enough, as a fresh-faced mercenary, your economic aims short term and the means to achieve them meagre. By aligning yourself with various clans, or 'Houses', you are given greater scope for opportunity, the cost of which could put you at the top of an enemy's most wanted list. Being one of those 'persistent world' games, war, peace, disease and disaster will all be dynamic – sometimes random – events, dependent not only on your actions but also on those of the hundreds of AI players.

Perhaps more revolutionary is the control method. Entirely mouse-driven, ship maneuvers are depended on a NeuroNet, an on-board set of programs that constitute the RPG side of the game. Graphically too, Freelancer is light years ahead of the competition. The detail and the size of the ships dwarfs anything that is currently available. Highly realistic light-sourcing can cast you into relative darkness the further from a distant sun you travel. It looks great.

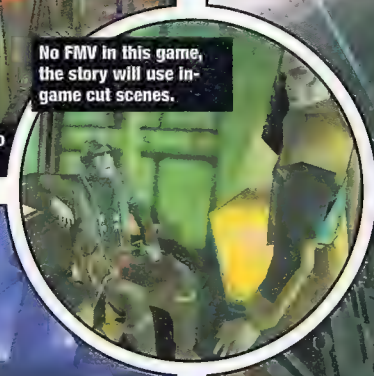
As to an accurate release date, we were told in May that Freelancer was 18 months to two years from completion, which considering how amazing it was back then, makes the wait all the more unbearable. Now with screenshots released to tease us, we can only hope it will arrive soon.

Some of the structures are immense, all with working and perfectly animated parts.



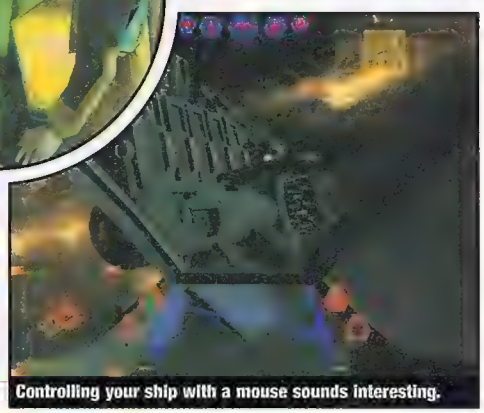
Early concept art, strikingly similar to the final graphics.

The light sourcing is amazing.



No FMV in this game, the story will use in-game cut scenes.

Freespace 2 had nebulas, but they never looked this good.



Controlling your ship with a mouse sounds interesting.

SHORTS

DEVELOPMENT HELL

Diablo II, which should have been out last Christmas, has slipped again and should now be released early in the new year. Developers Blizzard have never been ones to keep to their schedules. Remember *StarCraft*? All this points to the possibility that *WarCraft III*, currently slated for an autumnal 2000 release, could feasibly slip until well into the year after.

MECHWARRIOR PACKS UP

A *MechWarrior 3* expansion pack is soon to be released entitled *Pirate Moon*, offering 20 new missions and a campaign. Six new BattleTechs and five extra weapons will be featured as well as new environments to stomp across, including night-time missions and updated graphics. Multiplayer fans can look forward to two new deathmatch variants as well as a multiplayer campaign mode.

INFOGRAMES BUY GT INTERACTIVE

Further polarisation is imminent in the games industry as French outfit Infogrames lash out $135 million on GT Interactive, giving them a 70% share of the US giant and a valuable foothold in the US market. With Infogrames keen to keep a wholesome family image, GT Interactive will keep their more adult identity and continue development on key GT titles. *Duke Nukem Forever* and *Amen: The Awakening* will go ahead without disruption.

CLASSIC GAME SHOCK

The best of Midway's back catalogue are soon to be made available, for free, via www.shockwave.com. *Joust*, *Marble Madness*, *Defender*, *Spy Hunter* and *Moon Patrol* will all be arcade-perfect reconversions, playable full screen with the option to play online for worldwide ranking, or download. Currently Atari classics *Centipede* and *Missile Command* are available to play, as well as many other games including *Breakout* and *Frogger*. You will of course need a Shockwave-enabled browser to play.

SEVEN OF NINE

Yep, it's another *Star Trek* game

OK Trekkies, what ship is this? Pop your answers on a postcard and post them in the bin.

As if six *Star Trek* games weren't enough to be looking forward to, Simon & Schuster Interactive have announced a seventh (and their second), *Dominion Wars*, a 3D real-time strategy game of ship-to-ship combat. Just to confuse the numbers, *Dominion Wars* will be the fourth *Star Trek* 3D real-timer, either already available or on the way.

Where Interplay's recent 3D RTS *Starfleet Command* (*PCZ*#81, 83%) was based on the original *Star Trek* franchise and Activision's forthcoming *Armada* takes its inspiration from *The Next Generation* series, *Dominion Wars* will be based on *Deep Space Nine* – specifically the Dominion's Alpha Quadrant incursions in the show's fifth series.

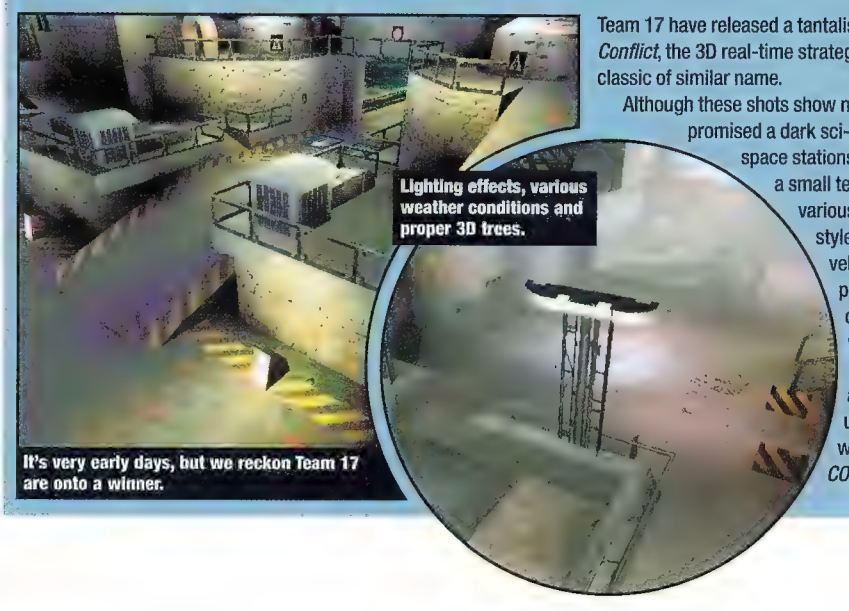
> **"Significantly, although linear in nature, a tree-like mission structure is promised"**

While the game will be in 3D, *Star Trek* fans hoping for something along the lines of *Homeworld* (*PCZ* #82, 94%) are likely to be disappointed. Movement of ships is strictly on a two-axis plane. *Star Trek*'s spacecraft being what they are – big – the number of ships under your control is unlikely to exceed six, although we are promised greater tactical control over them, with boarding parties and repair crews under your control.

Four playable races will be on offer (Cardassians, the Feds', Klingons and the Jem'Hadar), with points from successful missions being spent on repairs, new captains, upgrading ships or buying new ones. Significantly, although linear in nature, a tree-like mission structure is promised, and you can retreat from battle to try other routes through the game. It's out next year.

Developed by Gizmo Games. No, we've never heard of them either.

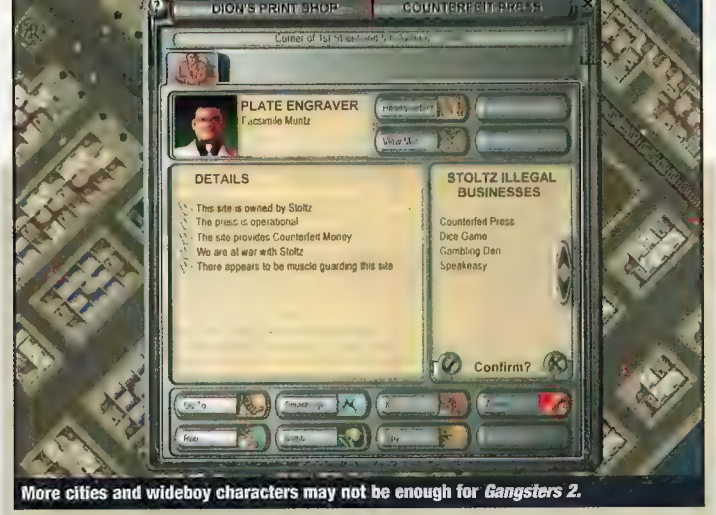
ALIEN BREED – FIRST SCREENSHOTS



It's very early days, but we reckon Team 17 are onto a winner.

Team 17 have released a tantalising glimpse of next year's *Alien Breed: Conflict*, the 3D real-time strategy game based on the early 1990s Amiga classic of similar name.

Although these shots show nothing of the gameplay elements, we are promised a dark sci-fi environment set across planet surfaces, space stations and even underwater bases. Players control a small team of technical experts and soldiers with various abilities that can be advanced in true RPG style, using weapons, machinery and various vehicles to defeat the alien hordes. Unlike previous versions of *Alien Breed*, that concentrated on all-out action, stealth tactics will be required, with troops able to set traps, use security cameras, sneak up on the enemy and use shadows to avoid detection. Some units will have psychic powers, others heavy weapons skills. Think of a cross between *X-COM* and *Thief: The Dark Project*, but scarier.



More cities and wideboy characters may not be enough for *Gangsters 2.*

GANGSTERS SEQUEL

Would you buy a watch from this man?

Hothouse Creations' real-time strategy game *Gangsters: Organised Crime* is about to spawn a sequel, *Gangsters 2*, which is planned for release through Eidos late next year. In a similar vein to it's less than illustrious predecessor, in the sequel you play the head of one of a city's criminal lower classes, with the aim to gain notoriety and hard cash by any number of illegal activities – the likes of which include; prostitution, gambling, bribery, assassination and plenty of violence – all in Depression-hit America.

New to the sequel will be more realistic cities and citizens, day and night cycles, and a range of specialist characters under your control (kidnappers, hitmen and hustlers), all of which combines with a number of extra cities to control. Let's hope the sequel doesn't end up wearing its predecessor's concrete slippers.

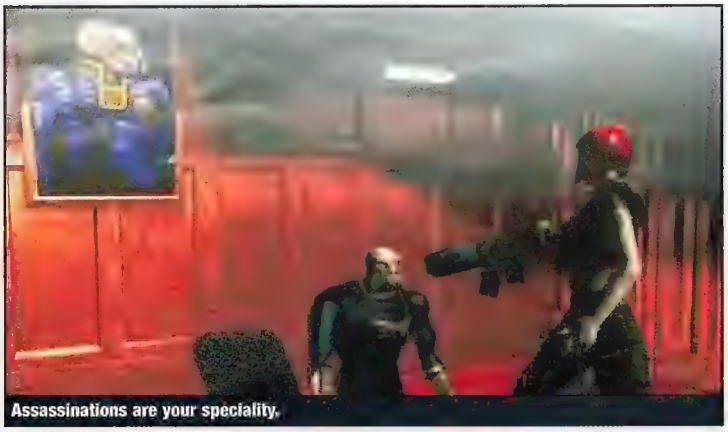
'Yer name's not down, yer not coming in!'

CLASH ON A TITAN

Fancy taking on hordes of foul aliens on the back of a 10ft Titan? Well in SCI's *Titanium Angels*, you can. Starring next-generation cyberlady and bounty hunter Carmen Blake, the game, which is expected to be out next autumn, pits you against the Kai'Tin, an alien race intent on taking over Earth.

As well as plenty of third-person action – running, somersaulting, climbing and shooting – what brings a unique twist is the ability to clamber on board your Titan. This isn't just some Mech-like drone either. Titan is a sentient being who can think for himself.

Citing influences as diverse as the N64's *Zelda* and the 8-bit classic *Head Over Heels*, SCI are confident that *Titanium Angels* is going to be huge. Once we've seen playable code, we might just agree with them.



Assassinations are your speciality.

WELCOME BACK TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS
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Large & Loud Internet Gaming
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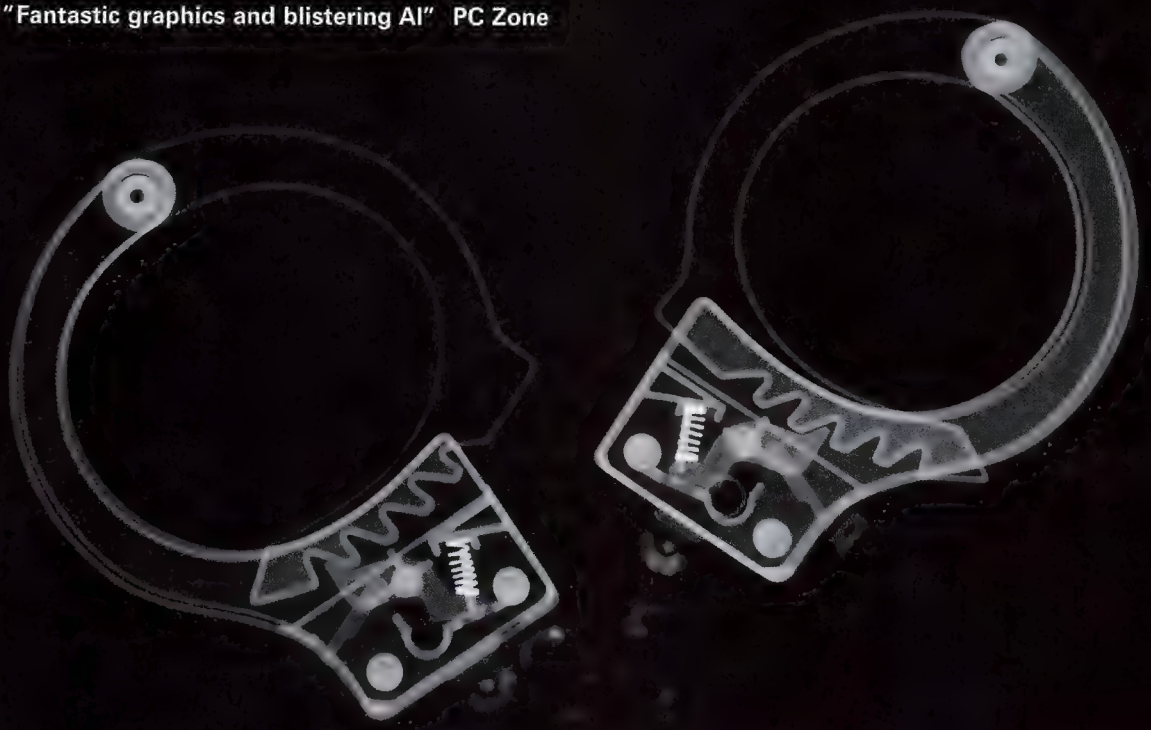
THE TRIGGER-HAPPY NEED NOT APPLY

"Fantastic graphics and blistering AI" PC Zone

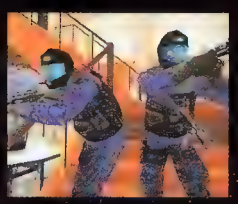


"Unbelievably, it's even more realistic than the rest of its mini-genre" PC Gamer

SWAT 3

CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE

THE ULTIMATE 3D SQUAD-BASED TACTICAL COMBAT SIMULATION



Take command of a five-man entry team utilising stealth and dynamic tactics
Choose mission or career mode, set within stunning real-life L.A. locations
Encounter over 100 goal-oriented characters who react to your every move

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SIERRA

CHARTS

All you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload, plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what *you* think

Microsoft's best chart placing for *Ages*.

THE Virgin MEGASTORES TOP 10

NOV	DEC	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	REV SCORE
NE	1	**THEME PARK WORLD**	BULLFROG	EA	70%
NE	2	AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	90%
NE	3	FIFA 2000	EA SPORTS	EA	88%
NE	4	F.A. PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALL MANAGER 2000	EA SPORTS	EA	75%
1	5	GTA 2	DMA DESIGN	TAKE 2	70%
2	6	DRIVER	REFLECTIONS	GT INTERACTIVE	83%
NE	7	MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2000*	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	80%
NE	8	PHARAOH	IMPRESSIONS	SIERRA	84%
3	9	C&C: TIBERIAN SUN	WESTWOOD	EA	90%
NE	10	RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP	MAGNETIC FIELDS	EA	82%

**Includes Virgin sales of both Standard and Pro Editions*

THE ChartTrack TOP10

OCT	NOV	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	90%
NE	2	FIFA 2000	EA SPORTS	EA	88%
NE	3	THEME PARK WORLD	BULLFROG	EA	70%
NE	4	MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2000	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	80%
NE	5	F.A. PREMIER MANAGER 2000	EA SPORTS	EA	75%
1	6	C&C: TIBERIAN SUN	WESTWOOD	EA	90%
NE	7	RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP	MAGNETIC FIELDS	EA	82%
NE	8	MS FLIGHT SIM 2000 – PRO EDITION	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	80%
2	9	GTA 2	DMA DESIGN	TAKE 2	70%
3	10	ROGUE SPEAR	RED STORM	TAKE 2	86%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 1999)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"Whatever finally happened to the charts? They're all new! Change isn't good! Come back everyone! Just where'd *System Shock 2* go? And how is *GTA 2* still in the chart? More to the point, why isn't *Rogue Spear* number one? It's the best game I've played since...well, *Rainbow Six*."
Splog, Edinburgh

"Microsoft seems to be dominating the charts. *Flight Sim 2000* is in there twice, along with *Age Of Empires 2*. Seems as though Bill Gates has been buying his own products again... *Age Of Empires 2* seems to be riding on its name. The AI is pretty shoddy, and it only comes to life when you're playing it online."
Alex Bayes, Chelmsford.

"It looks like EA have been flexing their sizeable muscles in time for Crimbo and even Gates seems to have clocked on that the big festive money is spent on gaming. The only surprise here is that *FIFA 2000* hasn't clambered back to its annual pole position. The big money is on *Q3A* to be Christmas No.1, but I quite fancy *CM 99/00* to take the crown."
Frew, Middlesbrough.

"Looks like there's a particularly nasty case of sequel-itis at the moment – there's not one single, original game in the chart – but it's great to see *Age Of Empires II* at the top. I'd say it's gonna be *Tomb Raider IV* for the top spot this Christmas, with *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament* cowering in her massive hemispherical shadows."
Max D, Oxford.

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

No surprise to see *Age Of Empires II* in the top slot this month, as *Unreal Tournament* has been delayed once again in an attempt to take the wind from *Quake III* sails. A big surprise, is the fact that just three publishers dominate the entire top 10; EA, Microsoft and Take 2. That's rare – but with publishers buying each other out every month, it may become a regular sight. Is that a good thing. Or is it the quality of the game that counts? Mind you, at the time of writing, many Yuletide biggies are yet to show; *Championship Manager 99/00, Tomb Raider IV, Unreal Tournament, Quake III Arena*, and *Indiana Jones* should all be out by the time you read this. And the Xmas No 1? Who cares? At Christmas good games *do* grow on trees.
Richie Shoemaker

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

1 FA Premier League Football Manager 99 *(EA)*
2 Caesar III *(Sierra)*
3 Titanic – Adventure Out Of Time *(Europress)*
4 Colin McRae Rally *(Codemasters)*
5 Grim Fandango *(Activision)*

2 YEARS AGO...

1 Championship Manager 97/98 *(Eidos)*
2 MS Flight Simulator 98 *(Microsoft)*
3 Age Of Empires *(Microsoft)*
4 Riven *(Broderbund)*
5 Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight *(Virgin)*

5 YEARS AGO...

1 Mega Race *(Mindscape)*
2 Doom 2 *(Virgin)*
3 Theme Park *(EA)*
4 Ecstatica *(Psygnosis)*
5 Rise Of The Robots *(Time Warner)*

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

***PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:**

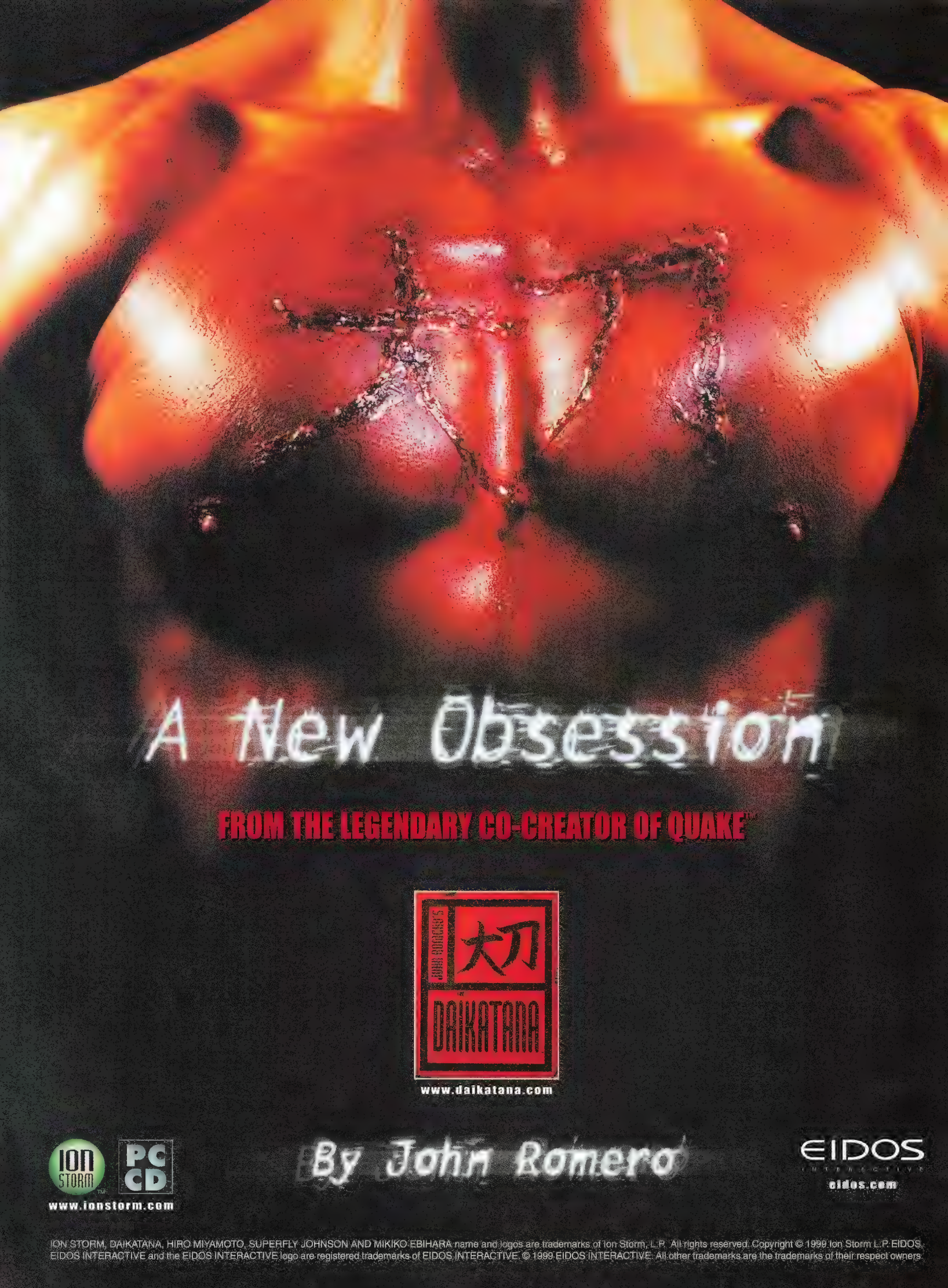
Question: *What was the name of the expansion pack for the original* Age Of Empires?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with with *all* the information requested, to the address below

- *Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*
- *Are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE*?*

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ001A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ Closing date: Tuesday 14 Jan

- *Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Ed's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. Capische?*



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PC ZONE READER AWARDS 1999

The only PC gaming awards that matter – voted for by you

Some of you may be wondering why we haven't yet had our annual awards yet, well to coin a phrase, they've slipped. The main reason behind this is that, previously being in early December, late Christmas releases were always missed out and consequently you lot couldn't vote for them – *Half-Life* being a case in point. Now moved to April, you will now be able to nominate any game released this year *and* have time to play them to death to see if they're worthy of a big silvery Z™.

Basically then, all we want you lot to do for now is ponder over the following categories and think about which game in each, above all others, impressed you most. We will be printing voting slips in the next few issues (you'll also be able to vote online), with various prizes up for grabs. Anyway, just think about it.

Best First-Person Action Game
(eg *Rogue Spear, Half-Life: Game Of The Year Edition, Quake III Arena, Unreal Tournament, Starsiege Universe, Descent 3, Hidden & Dangerous*).

Best Strategy Game
(eg *Homeworld, C&C: Tiberian Sun, Age Of Empires II, Theme Park World, SimCity 3000, Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri*).

Best Action/Adventure
(eg *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation, Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine, Messiah, Resident Evil 2*).

Best Sports Game
(eg *NBA Live 2000, FIFA 2000, Championship Manager 99/2000, International Cricket Captain 2, PGA Championship Golf*).

Best Driving Game
(eg *GTA 2, Rally Championship, Midtown Madness, Driver, Superbike World Championship*).

Best Role-Playing Game
(eg *EverQuest, Baldur's Gate, System Shock 2, Lands Of Lore III, Ultima Online: The Second Age, Ultima IX: Ascension*).

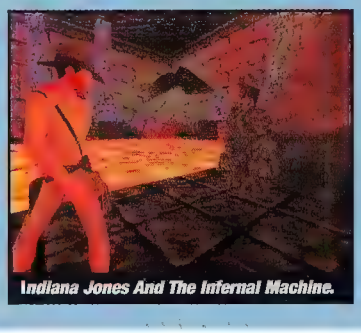
Best Simulation
(eg *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2000, FreeSpace 2, MiG Alley, Team Alligator, F/A-18 Super Hornet*).

Developer Of The Year
(eg *Valve, iD Software, Ensemble Studios, Westwood, Core Design, LucasArts, Origin, DMA Design*).

Publisher Of The Year
(eg *Sierra, Activision, Eidos, Electronic Arts, GT Interactive, Interplay/Virgin, Hasbro*).

Best Game of 1999
(eg *Age Of Empires II, Baldur's Gate, C&C: Tiberian Sun, Half-Life, Quake III Arena, Hidden & Dangerous, System Shock 2, Unreal Tournament*).

Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings.


Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine.

Driver.

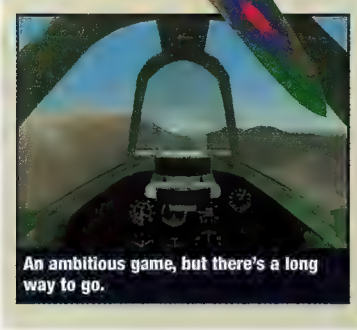
EverQuest.

WORLD WIDE WAR

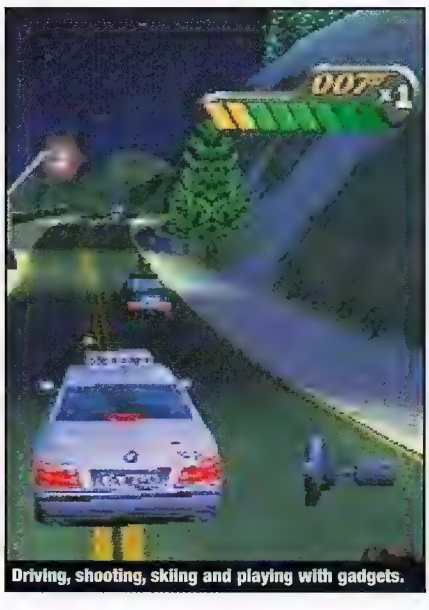
The future of online games, as predicted, is one where simulation, action, strategy and role-playing are all rolled into one in a realistic environment. And you won't find anywhere more realistic than this century's greatest conflict, World War II. *WWII Online* attempts to recreate that entire conflict via the interactive Internet, with players able to choose sides, select a discipline and battle it out with a view to survive and ascend the ranks. You will be able to choose either from the navy, air forces or armies of either axis or allied side, choose a vehicle (from tanks, planes or hulking great battleships), or stamp about on foot behind enemy lines. The higher your rank, the more control you have in the missions. Think a cross between *Wargasm* and *Team Fortress*, with every conceivable vehicle and weapon from the era.

Developed by Cornered Rat Software (the ex-*WarBirds* team), the first part of *WWII Online* will be *Blitzkrieg:1940*, set just after Germany's invasion of Poland, which should be released early next summer.

➔ World War II just when online...

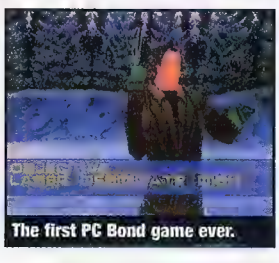

An ambitious game, but there's a long way to go.

Historically accurate, detailed and solely available online.



Driving, shooting, skiing and playing with gadgets.

No PC screens available yet.


The first PC Bond game ever.

BOND'S PC PREMIERE

As previously reported, EA have secured the worldwide rights to publish games based on the lucrative James Bond licence until well into the next millennium. What we haven't known until now is just what the first PC Bond game will be. Rumours of a 007 shooter using the *Quake III Arena* engine have yet to be confirmed, although a port of the PlayStation sure-fire hit *The World Is Not Enough* has been announced. The game, a 3D action adventure, will see Bond utilising weapons and gadgets, with adventure set pieces based on events in the recently released film. Stealth will play a major role, as will plenty of third-person action across 10 huge levels.

TECHHEAD

Microsoft once more tries to knock the industry out for the count, plus all the very latest hardware news

WEIGHING IN Carlos Ruiz

X-BOXING CLEVER

Microsoft's PC/console hybrid could move PC gaming into the living room

US judges have just ruled that Microsoft are indeed enjoying a powerful monopoly position in the PC market (surprise, surprise), a verdict that has taken them over a year to decide. The next step will be to determine whether Microsoft have violated anti-trust law – or, in layman's terms, bullied companies such as Netscape out of sheer rivalry. We'll tell you the result of that decision in around 12 months.

Although what will happen to Microsoft is uncertain as yet, they are not holding back in any way. In fact, it seems as if Bill Gates has clocked on to the fact that there is still one area of the industry he doesn't control – living room entertainment, which has been dominated by consoles for as long as anyone can remember.

Enter the X-Box (development title only, folks), which for 'internal' purposes has also been dubbed the Mariner project. What makes this so special is that to all intents and purposes, it is a PC pretending to be a console – as opposed to the future offerings of Sony and Nintendo, which are consoles masquerading as PCs.

The X-Box has not been officially confirmed, although 'industry people' got wind of it last August. For this reason any details are pure speculation, but here goes anyway...

Reports suggest the X-Box would use at least a 500MHz processor (made by either Intel or AMD, probably the latter), NVIDIA's GeForce 256 graphics technology, a fully functional hard disk drive, a DVD-ROM and an operating system based on a special blend of Windows 2000/NT.

It would plug straight into your TV or monitor and have the potential for stunning games, digital films, the Internet, email, networking and the like. This begs the question – what else do we use our PCs for anyway? At a price point of around £200, it would be far more economical to go for an X-Box than splash out £1,000 for a decent desktop PC. Of course, you can upgrade your PC to move with the times, but Microsoft would surely be releasing new, updated, backwards-compatible X-Boxes with every calendar year.

The secrets of X-Box are hidden deep within Microsoft HQ.

If current PC games are not compatible with the X-Box, dual-version titles will surely become popular with developers, being able to target two types of user with one product. Also, the X-Box will not be modifiable, meaning developing for it shouldn't be so much of a headache.

Microsoft seem to have a winner on their hands, just as long as they pull all the right strings. Our speculation concerning the future of the desktop PC as a gaming machine may be far from correct but, either way, the future of the X-Box is equally uncertain.

As a member of the games industry once famously commented: "No one takes on Microsoft and wins." And with as much as $6 billion backing the X-Box, you certainly wouldn't bet on that happening. The website is **www.microsoft.com**, in case you didn't know. Just don't expect to see anything regarding the X-Box for quite a while yet.

FACTCANNON

Aureal have released the third generation of their 3D positional audio API, aptly titled A3D 3.0. It has loads more top-notch effects and features, and support for multi-channel Dolby Digital and MP3 playback – any sound card based on it will definitely be one to look out for. See **www.a3d.com** for more details.

The new Gaming Modem from 3Com (**www.3com.com**) can reportedly allow faster ping times, reduced lag and improved stability, making for a better all-round experience when playing games online. The 56K internal PCI modem card comes with a selection of games for your multiplayer enjoyment, and should cost around £100.

Creative Labs have released their new range of SoundBlaster Live! sound cards, which appeal to budget users, gamers and artistes alike. The Platinum, for example, includes top-notch digital and musical capabilities and a drive bay packed full of inputs and outputs, all at a musician-friendly £155. There is also the MP3+ and the X-Gamer – visit the website (**www.soundblaster.com**) and see if anything takes your fancy.

3D CARD UPDATE

Preparing you for an onslaught of fourth generation graphics cards

With last month's round-up out of the way, you can rely on *PC ZONE* to bring you the latest graphics card reviews first. On page 112, for example, you'll find a comparison between the first two cards based on NVIDIA's GeForce 256 chipset – Guillemot's 3D Prophet and Creative's 3D Blaster GeForce Annihilator.

NVIDIA's much-hyped wild child is not the only one to look out for, because several other vendors are jumping on the hi-end bandwagon. Although NVIDIA have an advantage in that their cards have hit the shelves before anyone else, it would be wise to check out the competition.

Diamond's Viper II – a force to be reckoned with.

The Napalm technology from 3dfx (**www.3dfx.com**) looks set to be the first to break the 1,000 Megatexels/sec barrier. This kind of fill rate will be just the ticket for the games we are currently used to. When Transform & Lighting support becomes the norm in around six-to-eight months time, kick-ass T&L cards will be more preferable.

Since the merger between S3 and Diamond Multimedia, all S3 chipsets will be sold as Diamond-branded cards. The first Savage 2000 – with on-board Transform and Lighting – is the Viper II, a standard 32Mb AGP2x/4x variant capable of 500Megatexels/sec. It will have a TV out, hardware DVD support, and a price tag of around £170. Check out **www.diamondmm.com**.

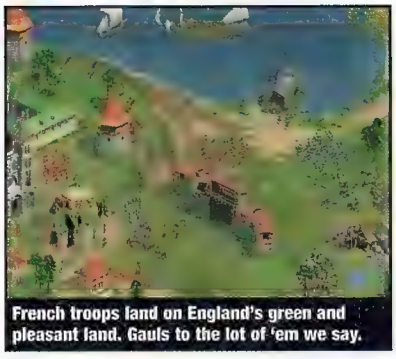
Each processor on ATI's MAXX needs a separate fan.

Going head to head with the top dogs in the 3D card race is ATI, with their new Rage Fury MAXX. With not one, but two 125MHz main processors working in tandem, and a total of 64Mb on-board RAM, this looks sure to kick ass in the speed department. It also has great hardware DVD support for those wanting to watch DVD films on a lower-end system, and all the usual particulars to make sure your games look as good as they run. See **www.ati.com** for more details.

The English navy rule the waves, obviously.

Over 8000 units can battle it out in each mission.

Set up trade routes between allied nations.


French troops land on England's green and pleasant land. Gauls to the lot of 'em we say.

Fight the English Civil War, the Thirty-Years War and many other historical scenarios.

Units can be set to different formations and you can even hire mercenaries.

EUROPEAN WARS

***No it's not Age Of Empires III*, in fact it's from Russia but it could be the next best thing**

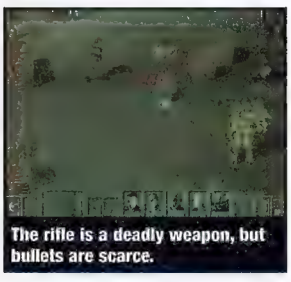
Although no announcement has yet been made, we can surely expect Ensemble Studios to soon start work on *Age Of Empires III* – if they haven't already done so. It will, no doubt, once again marry historical realism with real-time strategy mayhem, covering the next period of world history – from the late medieval to early industrial age, maybe even beyond. The danger is though, that someone somewhere could be working on their own version of *Age Of Empires III*. Surprise surprise that someone looks like Ukrainian developer GSC Games.

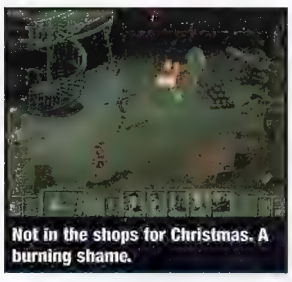
However far GSC Games may try to distance themselves from Ensembles efforts, the similarities between their own *European Wars: Warlords Style* and a future *AoEIII* are all too apparent: 16 European nations to choose from (from Prussia to England), six resources for peasants to collect (stone, wood, food, gold, coal and iron), single-player campaigns for each nation, random multiplayer maps and a technology tree spanning two ages (16th and 17th Centuries) with over 300 upgrades and units to research.

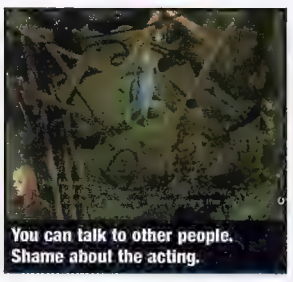
Although the graphics lack the polish and detail of Ensemble's, GSC are certainly pushing the boat out by expanding their list of features. Military units will continually consume resources for instance.

Due to be completed around February, no UK publishing deal has been confirmed. Whether the AI or balance of gameplay will stand up to even *Age Of Empires II*'s high standards, we shall have to wait and see. But if you'd care to check out the detailed game website (http://www.gsc-game.com/english/cossacks/index.shtml) you should find plenty to get excited about in the meantime.

"I can do it." Joe impresses mates with his hopscotch talents.


The rifle is a deadly weapon, but bullets are scarce.


Not in the shops for Christmas. A burning shame.


You can talk to other people. Shame about the acting.

STRANGE NAME, GOOD GAME

Imagine a *Final Fantasy* type of RPG with the combat system of *X-COM*, plenty of alien monsters to battle against and some very impressive FMV sequences. Well, such a game is *Odium*, formerly know as *Gorky 17* and currently gracing our hard drives like a particularly graceful thing. The release date has been pushed a few months into the new millennium, but we can tell you now that, if you're into turn-based strategy laced with a generous amount of character building and an absorbing storyline, you'll love this one.

The plot has your three NATO soldiers infiltrate a village used in Russian experiments to discover it's populated by repulsive and lethal mutants. There's loads of weapons (which you need to use wisely), people to find and the odd simple puzzle or two to solve. If we haven't reviewed it by the time Ubi Soft gets it into the shops, bear in mind that it bears our seal of approval. It's odiously addictive, man.

SHORTS

OH LORDY

Chris Wild has tarted up his remake of the classic Spectrum fantasy strategy game *Lords Of Midnight*. Now with an enhanced mouse-driven interface, a save/load feature and new graphics, you can download the latest version of the renamed *Midnight Engine* from www.icemark.com. Well worth it.

EVERQUEST IN RUINS

EverQuest mania is about to kick off again with the release of an expansion pack to the online RPG called *Ruins Of Kanarth*. Featuring a new continent, over 20 new zones, new NPC characters and Lizardmen – a new player race, the pack will allow players to progress past the level 50 limit set in the original – good news for Chris Anderson, whose interest in the game has flagged somewhat of late.

SLIDE AWAY

Ratbag Games (Aussie developers of *Powerslide* (PCZ#72, 78%), have announced their latest racing title as *Leadfoot*, an off-road simulation starring pick-up trucks and monster buggies set across a number of tight off-road circuits. Three classes of vehicle have to be mastered, all customisable to a ridiculous degree, with several championship modes available for each vehicle. Release is set for February, although no publisher has yet been announced.

ONLINE DIARY

Make your PC's muscles bulge with our range of electronic steroids

MR GO-FASTER Pee Wand

TWEAK IT

Hey, listen up! It's time to put some va va voom in your video and some poke in your processor

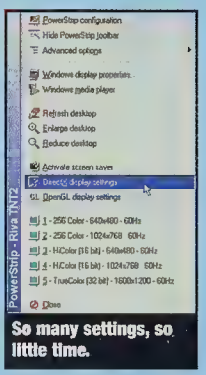
Tweaking. Everyone's doing it. From the boy racer next door who's put a new chip in his Subaru Impreza, to the mate down the road with an AMD processor running at almost twice its intended speed. We even know of a bloke who tweaked his *toaster*, fitting springs from an old radio-controlled buggy to make the freshly cooked bread leap from one side of the kitchen to the other. Those of you who've tried tweaking will know there's so much satisfaction in getting that little bit extra thrust from the factory standard model.

But why bother? Why not just buy a faster bit of kit in the first place? Because, silly, that's half the point of tweaking: it saves you some serious cash. In the case of the Subaru, it goes as fast as a Ferrari but is half the price. The AMD K6 plays games to the standard of a Pentium III, yet costs the princely sum of £75. And the toaster? The toaster delivers its goods straight onto your plate without you having to spear the slices with a knife. Convinced?

Good. Be warned, though, that tweaking has its downsides. Just as the Impreza's engine is likely to be that little less durable long term, so the AMD processor can overheat and cause the occasional crash. Our overclocked (ie diddled with the internal clock multiplier) Pentium II 266 proved such a bastard that we gave up and reverted to its factory standard settings. That said, as long as you're not too silly and are prepared for the occasionally bumpy ride, most CPUs are happy to be tickled *just a bit* without kicking up any sort of major fuss.

POWERSTRIP

Gain easy access to all the various settings, properties and functions of your video card. Auto detects most cards and monitors, and covers every aspect of video tweaking. Includes multi monitor support (eg Windows 2000) and is invaluable when overclocking Riva TNT2 cards.

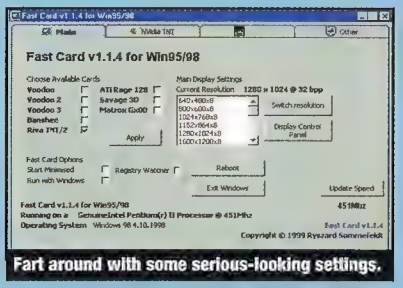

PowerStrip configuration
Hide PowerStrip toolbar
Advanced options
Windows display properties
Windows media player
Refresh desktop
Enlarge desktop
Reduce desktop
Activate screen saver
Direct3D display settings
OpenGL display settings
1 - 256 Color - 640x480 - 60Hz
2 - 256 Color - 1024x768 - 60Hz
3 - HiColor (16 bit) - 640x480 - 60Hz
4 - HiColor (16 bit) - 1024x768 - 60Hz
5 - TrueColor (32 bit) - 1600x1200 - 60Hz
Close
PowerStrip - Riva TNT2
So many settings, so little time.

www.entechtaiwan.com

FAST CARD

Superb freeware tool for tweaking 3Dfx Voodoo, Riva TNT/TNT2, ATI Rage, Savage 3D and Matrox G400 video cards. Lets you get at memory core and latency settings, mipmap levels, mipmap details, fog table emulation and various other nonsensical bits and pieces that'll make your mates think you're a hardware God.

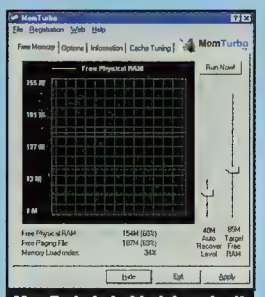
www.planet3dfx.com



Fart around with some serious-looking settings.

MEMTURBO

MemTurbo says it'll give any system that "just booted feel" with a single keystroke. And you know what? It bloody does. You're probably all too aware that, after hard usage, Windows can feel distinctly sluggish. MemTurbo automatically defragments system memory, recovers RAM from the operating system and from applications memory leaks, and performance tunes your file caching. It's definitely $19.95 well spent.



MemTurbo's bold claims don't appear to be exaggerated.

www.memturbo.com

SOFTFSB

100Kb freeware tool that changes the base clock of your processor without you having to reboot. Results are instantaneous, as are the crashes if you're a little too adventurous. Be aware that it may not work with all motherboards.

www.h-oda.com

WHAT'S ON AT GAMEPLAY

COUNTERSTRIKE By the time you read this, them Wireplay boys will be running the very latest version of *Counterstrike*, the planet's most popular *Half-Life* mod next to *Team Fortress Classic*. Look out for a super-fast download from the Wireplay servers also.

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS The trial version of Microsoft's latest real-time blockbuster is now available to fly on the Wireplay system. Hop on over to the *Age Of Empires* message board to arrange a tournament.

HOSTING They're still giving away free web space for your clan or other game related site, so if you fancy a cool Wireplay mail address and URL, visit the main page and fill out your details!

All at www.wireplay.co.uk

Wireplay now at gameplay.com

gameplay.com
we're never beaten

Online Diary is sponsored by gameplay.com

GO HERE NOW

TWEAKFILES

Tweakfiles are a friendly bunch of people whose aim it is to tweak anything – not just video cards and processors. If you could overclock keyboards, these people would be the first to archive the piece of software that helped you do it. Tweak categories are laid out neatly in the left hand margin, allowing you to slowly 'crawl' the site, fiddling and breaking things as you go. Files are plentiful, and all seem to do the sort of things that you've always wanted to do, but didn't know how. Top bookmark!

www.tweakfiles.com

3DFILES

Dealing with all manner of games for all manner of 3D cards, the 3DFiles site is a monster. Kicking off with a FAQ on accelerator cards (first question answered: "Can I download a 3D card?") and following on with game reviews, hardware reviews, articles, drivers, patches, screensavers and utilities. If you've got a 3D card, get a 3DFiles bookmark. Simple as that.

Everything is here, from TNT2 drivers to Lord Lucan. Er, Probably.

www.3dfiles.com

TWEAK3D

Run by a bunch of teenage dunderheads who list skateboarding, punk, caravan racing, ultraviolet lasers and "anything that can be called a bitch" as their hobbies, the Tweak3D site is actually a whole more mature than its creators. Most useful of all are the huge article and archive sections, where the knowledge of countless game geeks is disseminated. The news section is bang up to date. There are also areas on how to tweak other PC peripherals from modems to CD-ROM drives. Useful.

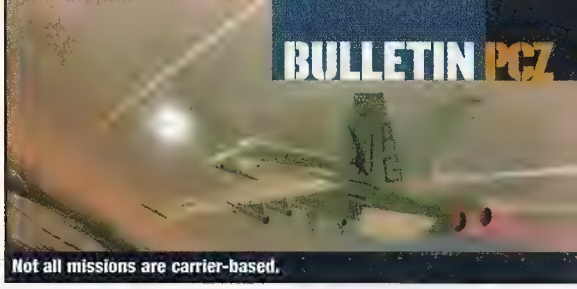
www.tweak3d.net

BIGKID

Warm, blue, friendly, touch-me chunky. Make sure you check the Articles section for a brilliant piece on overclocking a standard Diamond Viper V770 to beyond the specification of a V770 Ultra. With a little patience and a copy of Powerstrip, your video card will be pumping out more megahertz than an entry level Pentium. Highly recommended reading for all Riva TNT2 fans out there.

www.bigkid.com.au

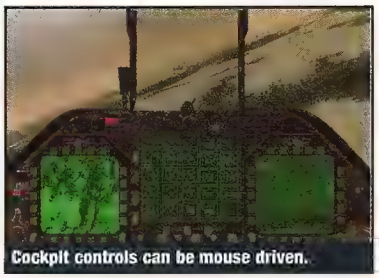
Jane's fire one up.


Not all missions are carrier-based.

OUR MOST WANTED

After having seen behind the scenes at Lionhead this issue, (see page 40), *Black & White* deservedly leaps up the Most Wanted list this month to take its place as the single most coveted software release.

1. **Black & White** (EA) _____ April
2. **Duke Nukem Forever** (GT Interactive) _____ April
3. **Star Wars: Episode I – Obi Wan** (Activision) _____ Summer 2000
4. **Vampire: The Masquerade – Redemption** (Activision) _____ February
5. **Team Fortress 2** (Sierra) _____ Summer 2000
6. **Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force** (Activision) _____ Spring 2000
7. **Freelancer** (Microsoft) _____ Winter 2000
8. **X-COM Alliance** (Hasbro) _____ Autumn 2000
9. **C&C: Renegade** (EA) _____ May
10. **Halo** (Take 2) _____ Autumn 2000


Cockpit controls can be mouse driven.

Bit of a traffic problem on deck there.

Ah yes, a few civilian targets.

JANES ON THE FLY AGAIN

Developed with the aid of the US Navy, *F/A-18* is the latest simulation from Janes Combat Simulations. Due to be released in February, and not to be confused with Digital Integration's recently released *F/A-18E Super Hornet* (*PCZ* #83, 88%), Janes' effort features a semi-dynamic set in Northern Russia, fighting alongside Russian forces to suppress 'breakaway Russian elements in control of highly advanced weapons'. Missions involve air-air(?) engagements, ground attack and anti-ship warfare, with mission objectives often changing throughout the game.

Graphically, Janes are sure to come up trumps again, with shimmering water, all manner of weather effects, 3D clouds and changing sea conditions. A new 3D cockpit with mouse-driven controls should help ease newcomers, but there'll be plenty of realism to satiate the hardcore flyboys. A mission editor will ship with the game, and players will be able to customise their tail designs and amend squadron setups.

SAVE *£20

*Off normal high street price

The *Doom* marine is back for *Quake III Arena*.

Capture The Flag in *Unreal Tournament*.

Assault missions – only in *Unreal Tournament*.

Meet new girls online and and blow their tits off.

We're still playing *Unreal Tournament* three months on.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT VS QUAKE III ARENA

Decide which is the best and buy both games!

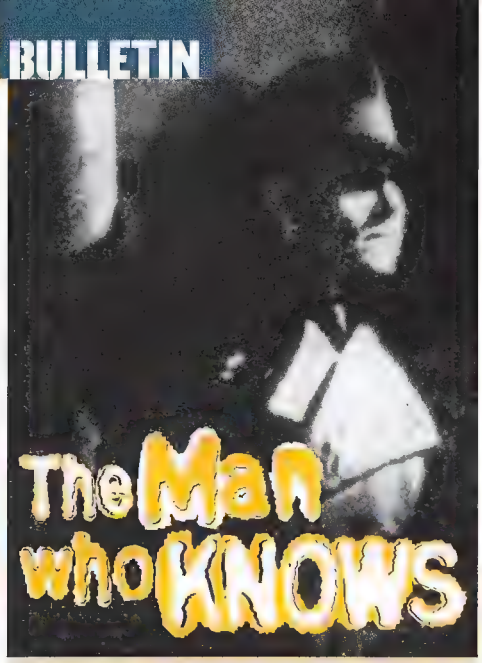
Shock rifles are buzzing and railguns overheating as the debate in the *PC ZONE* offices escalates into war over which is best: *Quake III Arena* or *Unreal Tournament*? Even the boys in the Gameplay sales office are laying on bets on which game will be number one in the new year. And just to raise the stakes, Gameplay are offering a massive £10 off both games. That's both *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III* for £24.99 each – the price of the average pint come New Years Eve (that's if you can get into a pub). Of course you don't have to buy both games, but you'd be mad not to.

All you have to do to qualify for this massive discount is to call the Gameplay Hotline on 0113 234 0444, keep your copy of this month's *PC ZONE* to hand and be ready to answer a simple question relating to the issue. Oh, and a credit card would be handy as well. Multiplayer heaven is now but a phone call away.

gameplay.com

we're never beaten

Wireplay is now at Gameplay.com



NO-ONE IS INNOCENT

The brutal actions of a gang of ruthless criminals is to be recreated in the name of entertainment. **SCi**, who last stoked the flames of controversy with pedestrian murder simulator *Carmageddon*, are now set to produce a game about **The Great Train Robbery**. Based on the 1963 heist in which 16 men hijacked a Royal Mail train, fatally coshed the driver and made good with £2.6m, players control either the infamous robbers or the hapless police. SCi has enlisted the services of surviving robbers, **Bruce Reynolds** and **Ronnie Biggs**, predictably sparking fury from the family of **Jack Mills**, the deceased driver. His son, **John Mills**, slammed the game as "Sick," and spat: "These men are not heroes. This sends out a message that it's okay to rob." SCi are naturally defending it to the hilt, sales director **Bill Innes** chuckling: "It is not a violent game and there is no way anyone could call it a 'video nasty', although I'm sure we'll have our critics in the tabloids." And they will, which is exactly what they want.

More violent death/games related news comes from **Brazil**, where ***Duke Nukem*** is being held responsible for a shooting spree. Police aren't actually charging Nukem with the offence, although they are suggesting that his game was a contributory factor. The actual perpetrator was student **Mateus de Costa Meira**, who killed three people and wounded eight others during an unprovoked attack. Police found copies of the game in his apartment, and naturally assumed that he had mimicked the in-game action, which includes shooting pigs and octopuses. It is not known whether any cigars or chewing gum were found.

The Matrix is to be made into a virtual reality computer game. **Larry** and **Andy Wachowski**, the brothers who wrote and directed the movie, revealed: "If things work out, the videogame will be released when the next movie comes out and it will actually have something to do with the movie." As for the developer, a number of names have been mooted, not least that of **Shiny Entertainment**, whose President **Dave Perry** beamed: "I can't say much, but I've spoken with them about making the game. Not all movies make great videogames, but this one would. Andy and Larry love playing games and they know what they want to do. They really care and they want total control over it. I was actually offered the chance to make a *Matrix* game about two years ago, but I was too busy with *Messiah*. I've spoken with them again since the movie came out, but now there are lots of people in the running. I'd love to make it but deals in Hollywood take a long time to complete, and it'll be a long time before any of this gets settled." However, I can confirm that Perry recently had lunch with **Warner Bros** at **Laguna Beach**'s exclusive **Splashes** restaurant. I can also confirm that they do a nice bit of fish.

COMPETITION

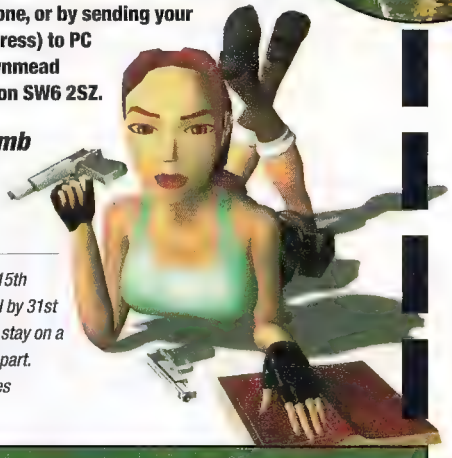
WIN! TWO RETURN EUROSTAR TICKETS TO PARIS

gameswire.com DELIVERING GAMES

eurostar

Rather than giving away games, PCs or the latest 3D accelerator, we though it was about time gamers got to seeing something of the world outside of a Quake level. Together with new Internet retailers Gameswire.com, we thought what our game-addicted readers needed was a trip to the romance capital of the world, Paris. Take your girlfriend or boyfriend and never again will you be given the cold shoulder after slipping into bed at 4am after six straight hours playing games.

All you have to do is answer the simple multiple choice question below, either online at www.gameswire.com/pczone, or by sending your answer (including your name, age and address) to PC Zone Competition, Gameswire.com, 37 Townmead Business Centre, William Morris Way, London SW6 2SZ.



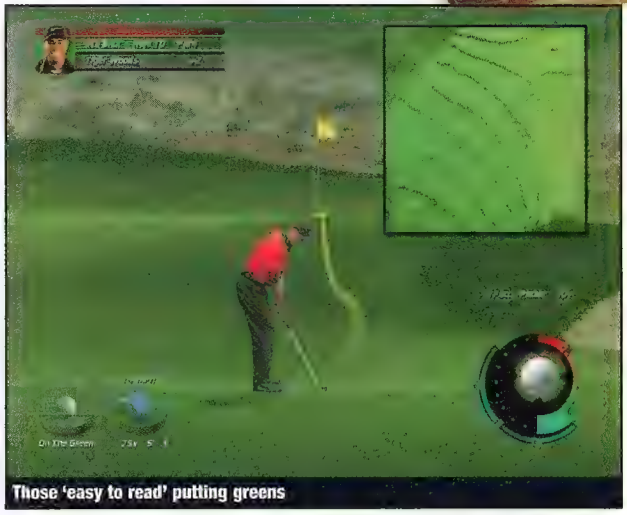
QUESTION: In which country is *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* set?

A FRANCE **B** EGYPT **C** CHINA

COMPETITION RULES *Closing date for entries is 15th January and winners will be notified by post or email by 31st January. Your trip to Paris must include an overnight stay on a Saturday. Entrants must be 18 years or older to take part. Winners must give at least 21 days notice of the dates on which they wish to travel.*

TICKERTAPE

STARTS++ LucasArts and *EverQuest* creators Verant are rumoured to be working on a *Star Wars: Episode I* online-only game, currently in the planning stages **++STOP++** The 'first half of next year' (Talk about vague – *Ed*), is the release date for *Urban Operations*, the first mission pack for *Rogue Spear*. New weapons, multiplayer maps and a single-player campaign are all on the cards. While we're in *Rainbow* mode, Paramount Studios have enlisted scriptwriter Michael Schiffer (of *Crimson Tide* fame) to make some words for the forthcoming *Rainbow Six* movie **++STOP++** Mission pack maestros Tulsa (*Wages Of Sin*), could neither confirm nor deny that another official *Half-Life* mission pack is in the works. An announcement either way will be made in January **++STOP++** Simon & Schuster Interactive have signed a deal that should see a game based on the *M&M* characters from the TV commercials. Likely to be one for the kids, the first title should surface late next year **++ENDS**



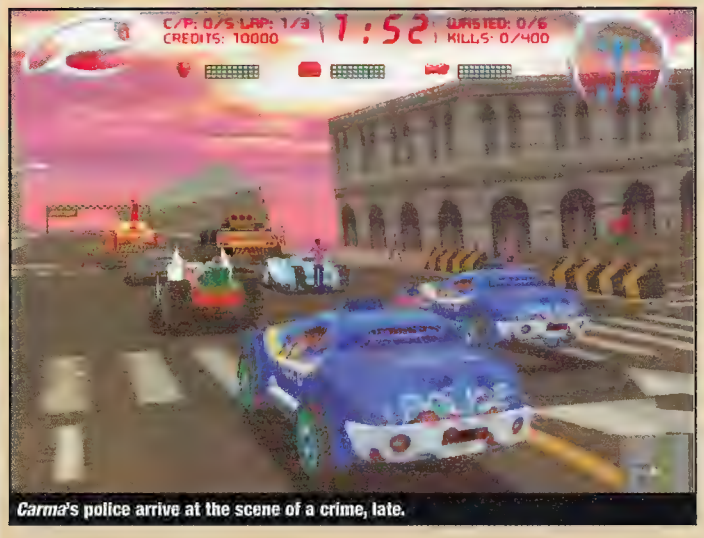
Those 'easy to read' putting greens

EASY TIGER

Out late next February is EA Sports' latest licensed golf game *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2000*. With the eponymous motherputter providing motion capture, new features to the new release will include a PGA Tour mode, 'easy-to-read' putting greens, real-time swing synchronisation, a course builder, real golf professionals and even more accurate ball physics.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

You should know by now that all release dates are wrong and games publishers are bare-faced liars. Here are the porkies from three of the best...



Carma's police arrive at the scene of a crime, late.

CARMAGEDDON TDR 2000 (SCI)

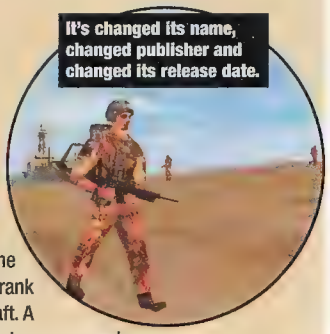
LAST SEEN *PCZ* #78
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE November 99

In a rare excursion from the *PCZ* bunker, we recently went down to SCI's 'sarf' London HQ to catch a look at the latest incarnation of *Carmageddon*. Previous viewings simply promised more of the same anarchic gameplay, with little *really* to write home about save for a few shiny surfaces. Recently, however, *Carma* has changed direction. First off, shock horror, *TDR 2000* will have a story – *Escape From New York* – stylee – with dark, decrepit cities populated by wideboy gangs, bent coppers and GM humans (read zombies) – all just dying to come face-to-face with your speeding eagle. Neat.

NOW OUT April 2000

FLASH POINT (Ubi Soft)

LAST SEEN *PCZ* #71
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE Summer 99

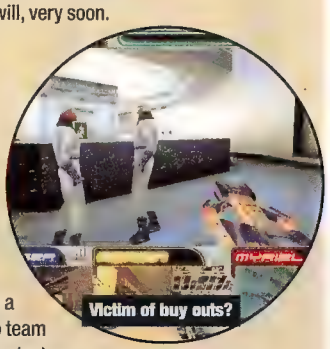


We saw this impressive tactical shooter way back in March when it was due to be the first decent game published by Interactive Magic. But they gave up on games and sold it Ubi Soft. Developed in Prague (*Hidden & Dangerous* territory), the game's set in a future WWIII, with the player as a lowly foot soldier, who can later gain rank to command trucks, tanks, helicopters and aircraft. A quick call to Ubi Soft revealed the game's due next summer, and an offer of a visit to try the game out. Which we will, very soon.

NOW OUT June 2000

HIRED GUNS (GT Interactive)

LAST SEEN *PCZ* #73
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE June 99



Hired Guns slipped behind in the release schedules in '99, as Psygnosis was swallowed up by GT Interactive Using the Unreal engine, it allows players to control a squad of four sci-fi mercenaries, each with their own on-screen viewpoint. AI is said to rival that of *Half-Life*, with a wide number of commands that can be issued to team mates and enemy units acting in co-ordination against you.

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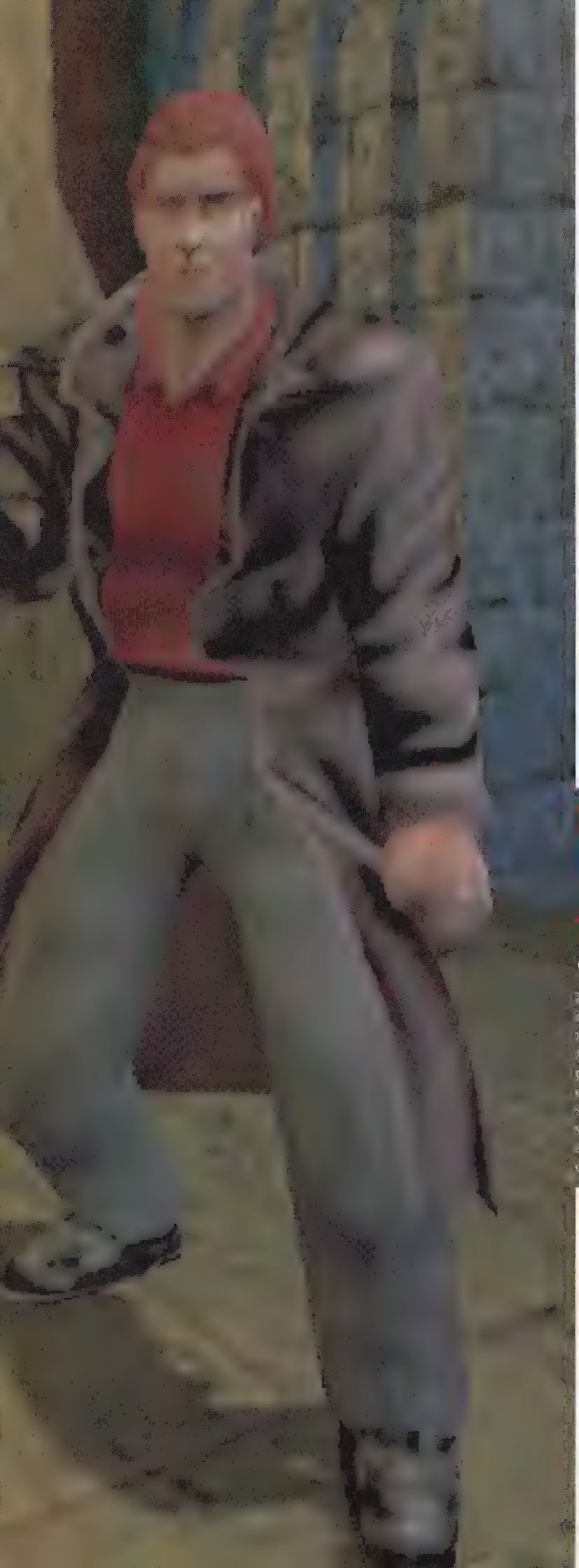
HOTSHOTS

In which *PC ZONE* takes a look at hot new games that will be coming your way soon. This month we've got brand new screenshots from Activision's *Vampire: The Masquerade – Redemption*



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – REDEMPTION

Activision • Out February

If there's a game that has consistently wowed us and made us twitch maniacally in anticipation every time we've caught a glimpse of it, it's *Vampire*. Based on the table-top (and scarily, live action) game that is second in the US only to AD&D, it's looking exceedingly gorgeous (as you can see for yourselves) and promises to deliver a slice of blood-soaked role-playing heaven and revolutionise online gaming in the process. The multiplayer part will be based around a storyteller who co-ordinates the game and story for a small group of players and who can even jump into any of the monsters. Single players can look forward to an epic tale across two time periods (medieval and modern), action, adventure, character interaction and the sweet sweet taste of a young maid's jugular.

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PLANESCAPE TORMENT

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Character creation is just the beginning - throughout the game your character adapts to fit your own personal gaming style.

The Planescape universe is a setting you've NEVER experienced before, filled with sharp-edged visuals, bizarre adversaries, and strange magics.

Encounter inventory items with personalities. Manage an unpredictable party of the strangest allies to walk the faces of alternate planes.

You can regenerate, speak with the dead, and have magical immunities. You're a power to be RECKONED with. Unfortunately, so is everyone else.

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Praise be! God is both BLACK &

Like a proper pint of Guinness, it's been a long time coming. *Keith Pullin* discovers that not everything in *Black & White* makes sense

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Lionhead Studios
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts/Lionhead Studios
WEBSITE www.lionhead.com
OUT March

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- First game from Peter Molyneux for four years
- You can be good, or you can be bad
- Incredible AI and some amazing character evolution techniques.
- A fully interactive environment
- Characters are realistic
- You can take your '*Tamagotchi*' online to pick up bad habits

Hurling fireballs has been proven to be bad for the environment.

A naked Red Indian seeks refuge after a fight. His cuts will soon heal, but the scars will remain forever.

Over the past two years, Lionhead Studios have fed small, tantalising scraps to one drooling *PC ZONE* writer after another. Those who've crossed the threshold into the Lion's den invariably returned with tales of beautiful villages beset by hideous monsters and Tamagotchi with fangs. We were left confused – impressed and hopeful – yet confused.

Ironically, just as we arrived at the conclusion that industrial espionage would be the only sensible way to get more information, it happened: an invitation down to their pad, where, once and for all, everything would be revealed. Maybe...

WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?

Okay, first things first. *Black & White* is not just another god game. It's a role playing game. Sure, you play the part of a divine entity with the destiny of one of nine tribes who are putty in your omnipotent hand. And yes, there's the usual cacophony of spells, powers and nifty tricks that can be used, abused and cast into the fray. Fine. We've seen all that before. What makes *Black & White* so original is the manner in which you go about your godlike duties.

The loving, caring and sickeningly benevolent deity can build houses for his/her citizens to live in, ensure the land is fertile for crops and cattle, and generally make life a big shiny, happy ball of fluffiness.

On the other hand you can be a total arsehole, to put it mildly. You can throw your followers into the sea, rip up their forests and slaughter their cattle. In short, *Black & White* lets you be the god you want to be – depending on your mood, of course. In essence, it's a kind of weird personality test.

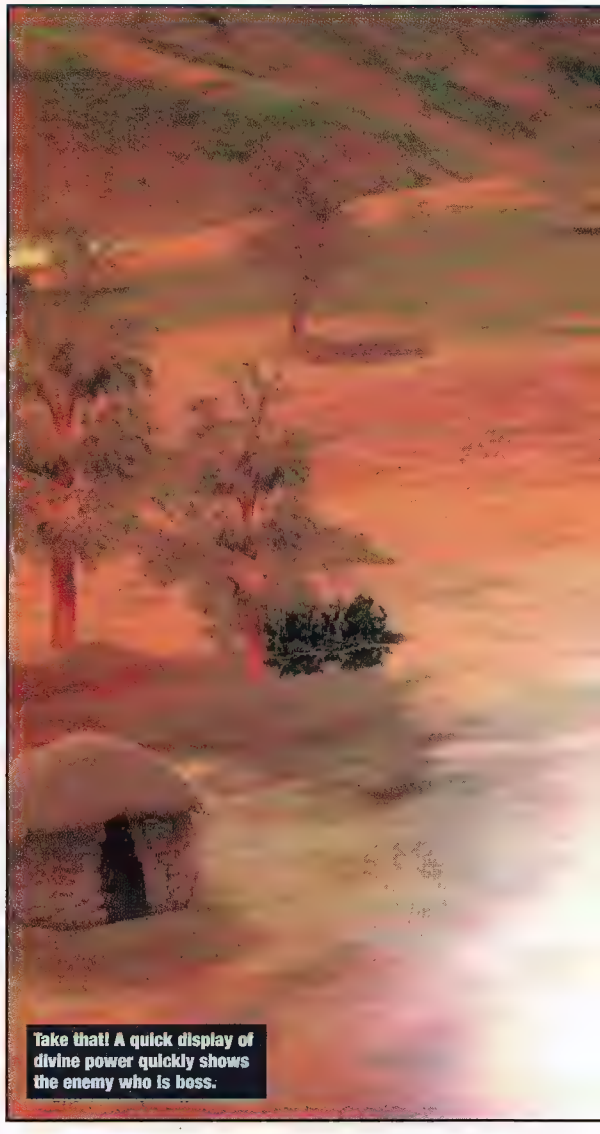
"You can throw your followers into the sea, rip up their forests and slaughter their cattle. In short, *Black & White* lets you be the god you want to be"

But what of the actual gameplay? What exactly do we have to do? You, as god of your tribe, must attract followers in order to grow more powerful and defeat the other tribes of Eden. Tribes include Greeks, Japanese, Tibetans, Zulus and Aztecs. Nothing groundbreaking there, but now for the clever bit.

Unlike games such as *Populous* and *Dungeon Keeper*, there are no levels as such – just a collection of worlds that can be visited via an innovative method of 'opportunities'. These are presented to you throughout the game, depending on your current good/evil alignment. For example, you may come across a hut in the middle of a forest with a small girl crying outside. A good adviser pops up on the left of the screen, and a devil appears on the right. "Help the girl!" implores Mr Good. "Burn the hut!" cries Mr Evil.

Talking to the girl reveals that her brother has hurt himself in the forest and needs help... Good: "Save the boy!" Evil: "Kill the boy!"

And thus your fate develops. Saving the boy could give you more information on the whereabouts of a new spell or ability. That in turn could give you access to a new


Take that! A quick display of divine power quickly shows the enemy who is boss.

WHITE

world. Then again, killing the boy might endear you to a particular tribe who wanted him dead anyway. Said tribe will then give you alternative opportunities.

You could ignore the girl altogether. As a god, such things are beneath you anyway. Like we said – RPG.

CREATURE COMFORTS

There's one huge, throbbing side effect to all your divine actions, though. At the start of the game you get to choose a creature to act as your general, to be your eyes on the ground, if you like. Your sidekick could be a tiger, lion, ape, cow or even a person. But more to the point, this 'familiar' will roam the landscape and generally do the kind of tasks it thinks you, as its master, will appreciate.

It achieves this by watching your every move and then learning. It's the ultimate case of a child mimicking adult behaviour: if you go round hurling innocent villagers off the tops of mountains, your impressionable young creature is not going to know any better, is it? It has absolutely no concept of what's right or wrong, so it will just go ahead and copy you.

From a small baby, your likeness slowly grows until ultimately it becomes a kind of enormous roaming guardian. As it matures, its appearance also changes. Good pets adopt kindly features and their skin or fur takes on a shimmering golden hew. On the flip side, if little Wolfy is shoving villagers into his mouth at every opportunity, stomping on houses and generally being a bit of a

CV

LIONHEAD

LIONHEAD STUDIOS

Peter Molyneux set up Lionhead Studios shortly after leaving Bullfrog in 1997. Currently there are approximately twenty full-time staff. *Black & White* will be the company's first release.

Black & White is Lionhead's first project. If this is a hit, expect to see another game in about three years time.

BLACK & WHITE WORLDS

The gathering of deities should lead to one hell of a scrap

The online side to the game should be impressive. Up to nine players can battle it out over a LAN or the Internet in a world domination type affair. The tribes participating in this divine talent show are: Aztec, Japanese, African, Tibetan, Egyptian, Greek, Zulu, Cossack and Red Indian. So there you go.

Character detail in the finished game will be vastly improved.

A young lion discovers the wonders of throwing stones at villagers.

Note the style and variety of these lovely little houses.

Windmills rotate and trees sway in the wind. Attention to detail is truly stunning.

The sheer variety of terrains available on each world is stupendous.

Q&A

RICHARD EVANS

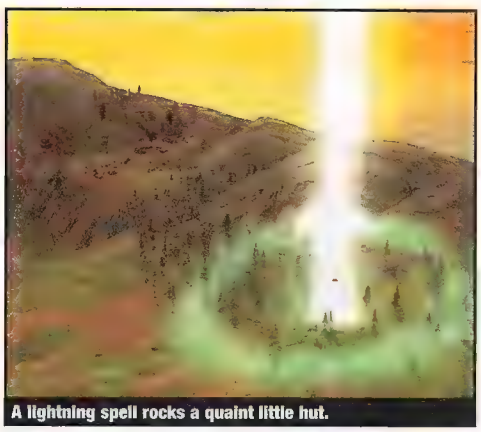
Lionhead's God of Artificial Intelligence applies his advanced neurones to our not-so-intelligent questions on life, games, and everything...

PCZ What's the first game you ever played?
RICHARD *Space Invaders*. I liked the way it made your heart beat faster.
PCZ What's the best game you've ever played?
RICHARD I suppose the best game I've ever played is *Zelda*, but my favourite game, the game I most enjoyed, was *Lemmings*.
PCZ What other games have you played where you've admired the AI routines?
RICHARD The '*Theme*' games from Bullfrog.
PCZ Do you think the *Terminator* scenario (intelligent machines taking over the planet) could ever happen?
RICHARD Highly unlikely, at best. Jeez... Get a grip.
PCZ Have you ever been in a fight before, and if so what happened?
RICHARD No, not really. "Imagine all the people, living life in peace".

GESTURE THIS

Forget your spellbooks, a simple gesture can speak volumes when casting spells

Another of *Black & White*'s innovative aspects is the 'gesture recognition' technology. This allows spells to be cast, practised and perfected by mouse movement alone. Say you wanted to cast a firewall spell (shield), for example; all you have to do is sweep the mouse around in a circle. From this basic movement, Lionhead's GR technology can sense the type of spell you want to cast and execute it. The more accurately you perform the gesture, the stronger the spell.



A lightning spell rocks a quaint little hut.

malevolent pain, he'll turn reddish, flames and smoke start seeping off his back, giant teeth appear, and hey presto – evil monster ahoy.

Appearance isn't just a good/evil thing either. If our creature's doing a lot of manual labour or fighting, muscles start to form on its body. If it's not getting enough food, it will become emaciated and pathetic looking. Anything and everything that is likely to affect your pet's development is taken into account. A completely revolutionary wounding and healing process further enhances this infinite possibility scenario.

Paul McLaughlin, Lionhead art supremo, explains the process: "The creatures bruise in a particularly nasty way when hit. They also bleed and the blood trickles down their bodies. Over time, the cuts heal but the scars remain. If you see an old creature who's been around a bit, it's immediately apparent that they've been through a lot."

Now that's what we call attention to detail, but can creatures actually lose entire limbs and still function? That would be cool...

Lionhead's founder, Peter Molyneux, explains: "We dabbled with the idea, but it started to get a bit too *Monty Python* really – legless creatures crawling into battle and that kind of thing... However, you may find a creature with one arm missing or something like that."

HOLY SHIT

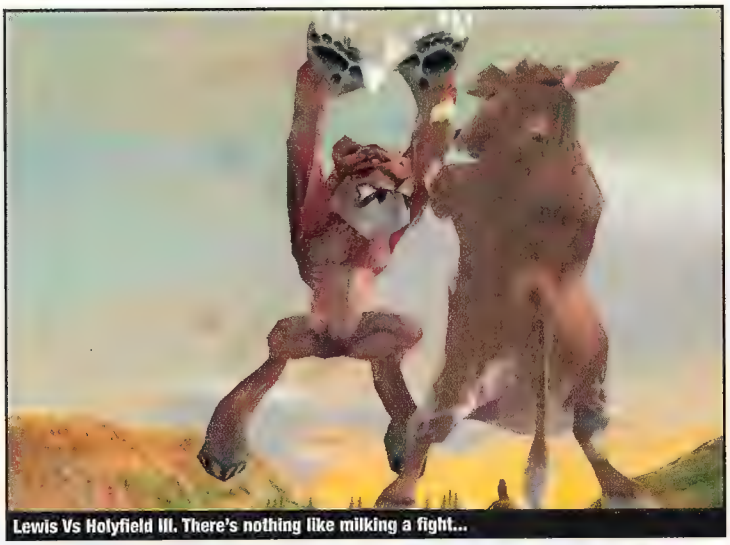
At one point, Molyneux started cooing excitedly after his enormous upright tiger shifted a giant rock that was obstructing his villagers' daily routines. On the surface, this may seem like a relatively simple thing to do, but the fact that this creature made this 'conscious' decision without any input whatsoever from the player is testimony to the AI routines implemented in the game.

These routines also cover actions like eating, sleeping, dancing, smiling, grimacing and crapping. Yes, that's right – defecation. The creatures have healthy bowels – so much so that the piles of dung found pebble-dashed across the world can actually be thrown at enemies. We witnessed what can best be described as a shitfight: creatures hurling boulder-sized stools at each other until they vomited. Frankly, this made no sense whatsoever. And it wasn't meant to. When quizzed, Molyneux had this to say: "I like my games to be like playing in a sandpit. You just sit there and do or make whatever you want. I don't want set strategies, and I don't want people to feel as though they're being led down a railway track. The most important thing is that the player has the freedom to do pretty much whatever they want."

> **"We witnessed what can best be described as a shitfight: creatures hurling boulder-sized stools at each other"**

You may call it sick, twisted, even disgraceful – the fact remains it's original and it's the funniest thing we've seen on a PC screen for a long time.

A giant cow ponders his next move.


Lewis Vs Holyfield III. There's nothing like milking a fight...

GATHER ROUND FRIENDS

With Black & White, the gods can talk amonst themselves

The Gathering **is a small stand-alone program that allows you to create your own *B&W* creature, and then chat with other players in a specially designed online world. Of course, you're not limited to simply talking, you can fight if you want. *The Gathering* also checks your ICQ and AOL friends list and tells you whether any are online. It also gives you the option to send *The Gathering* to them if they haven't already got it.**

Sadly, until *Black & White* is released, you won't be able to save your creations. When the full game is released you will indeed be able to save them. In fact, time spent online also counts as game time, so if you've been hanging around with a bunch of evil gits for a while, the chances are your creature might need a bit of discipline when you next play your own saved game.

Strange, yet brilliant.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

So those are your Tamagotchi – but what of Eden, the world they inhabit? Well, at first glance, there is a striking resemblance to Bullfrog's *Populous: The Beginning*. In a way, that's to be expected: Molyneux was the guy who invented the original game after all. However, closer inspection of the world reveals much more.

The 3D graphics engine is a stunning affair. In true omnipresent style, you can zoom down through a building, on to a table, where a maggot emerges from inside an apple. You can then zoom out again, up into the stratosphere, and have a view of the entire world in all its glory.

Back at ground level, things are shaping up nicely. The grainy texture of the many terrains is highly authentic – trees bend in the wind, and water ripples and laps the shoreline. Even the clouds will cast shifting shadows across the ground as they move overhead.

So does this mean we're going to get weather, too? "The weather effects aren't yet implemented," says McLaughlin. "We're really looking forward to that – particularly the build-up of snow on the slopes after a storm. Of course, it'll all melt away when the sun comes out, but the little people should have some fun while it lasts."

A monkey gets a good spanking after upsetting the local women.

Cool. So what about night and day?

McLaughlin ponders: "We've got lots of offline and real-time lighting techniques, volumetric lights and fogs, reflection mapping, environment mapping – and it all grows and morphs."

Sounds almost like a "no", but again it all boils down to the Jekyll and Hyde thing. If you're evil, the sky darkens, the black clouds roll in, thunder and lightning crackles and your domain is transformed into a vision of hell. If you're good, the sky is blue, the sun shines and birds sing merrily. Which brings us on to the sound...

Russell Shaw, head of sound and music, reckons it's the most ambitious project he's ever worked on. "As you move around the landscape, the music morphs between evil, neutral and good scores, as well as including the correct ethnic instrument set for each tribe." Sound effects are conjured up with unprecedented attention to detail: "The sound effects are incredibly detailed, high quality and in complete surround 3D. In total, *Black & White* has over 5000 individual sound effects."

Add to this the automatic lip-synced narrated help system, arranged musical scores for scripted story chapters, quests and challenges and you have what should, hopefully, be an acoustic masterpiece.

NEARLY THERE

What we really want to know is, when's it out? The good news is that it's not long now. March, hopefully – at least that's what head of testing, 'Gestapo' Andy Robson, thinks. What about releasing it sooner and then releasing a patch to fix any bugs? "I don't agree with putting games out that are unfinished. What's the point?" groans Robson. "Why work on a patch when you could have just fixed all the problems in the first place, and then release the game a month later? I know companies have deadlines and publishers want to push the game out for Christmas or for the end of a quarter, but people have to buy these games, and why should they buy an unfinished game? It's simply not fair – we should ban patches."

We couldn't agree with you more, Andy.

We'll be bringing you the review as soon as we possibly can. Until then, keep checking the Lionhead website, it's got loads more info and, apart from anything else, it's probably the best-designed site ever. If it's any indication of the effort that's been put into the game, we are about to be very spoiled indeed. PCZ

Bringing RPGs to the people, it's FINAL FANTASY VIII

We had to scrap *Mark Hill*'s original preview as his fantasies were deemed just too disturbing for the general public. Thankfully, he consented to write about this most anticipated Japanese RPG instead...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Squaresoft
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
WEBSITE www.squaresoft.com
OUT January

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's a good conversion rather than the afterthought that was *FFVII*
- The characters are more realistic and thus easier to relate to
- *Chocobo World* is a PC-only, Windows-based game
- The FMV has been included and it looks fantastic
- Immersing story and character development

CV

SQUARESOFT

Square have been pumping out console titles since 1986, but FFVIII is their only title on PC this far.

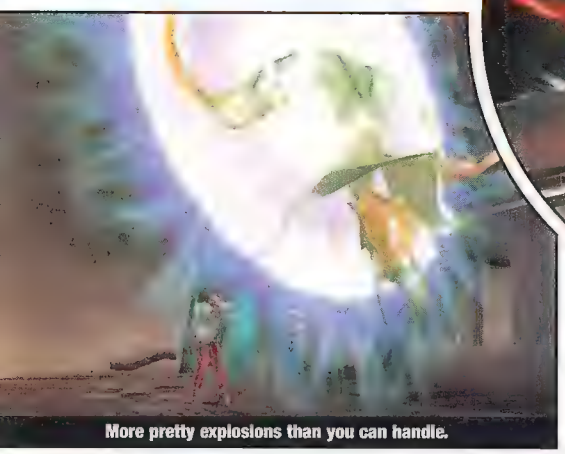
FINAL FANTASY VII (*PCZ* #66, 93%)

One moment sticks out in our minds because it represents the world's awakening to games as a serious form of entertainment: the 1997 TV campaign for *Final Fantasy VII* on the PlayStation. Lara Croft had already established herself as a recognisable icon, but this showed games striving for the same kind of impact as Hollywood blockbusters. Displaying some spectacular FMV sequences to a grandiose dramatic score, the adverts announced the growing up of video games with all the panache of a teenager going to Las Vegas to lose his virginity. The gamble paid off. Despite being a Japanese RPG, featuring cutely deformed characters with bigger (and sharper) hair than swords, the game became a massive console hit. It had a compelling, story, well crafted characters with developing relationships and fantastically colourful graphics. "Isn't that exactly what PC gamers want?" Squaresoft asked themselves, and proceeded to convert it to our delightful GreyStations, where it didn't nearly sell quite as much. It's not difficult to figure out why. It came out a year and a half later, for a start, when everybody who wanted to play it had already done so on its original platform and the whole craze had long blown over.

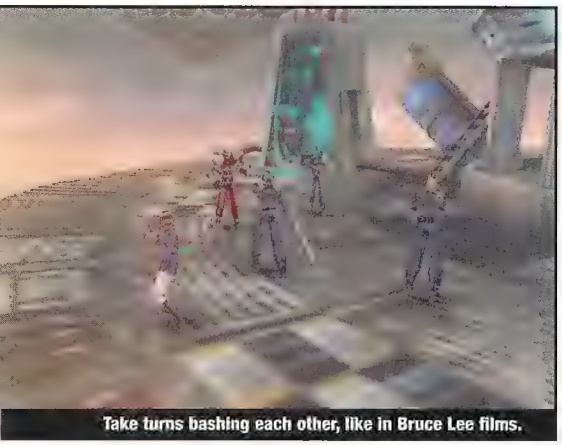
This time the whole approach to *FFVIII* is more potentially PC-friendly and has been geared towards

It's time for a radical haircut.

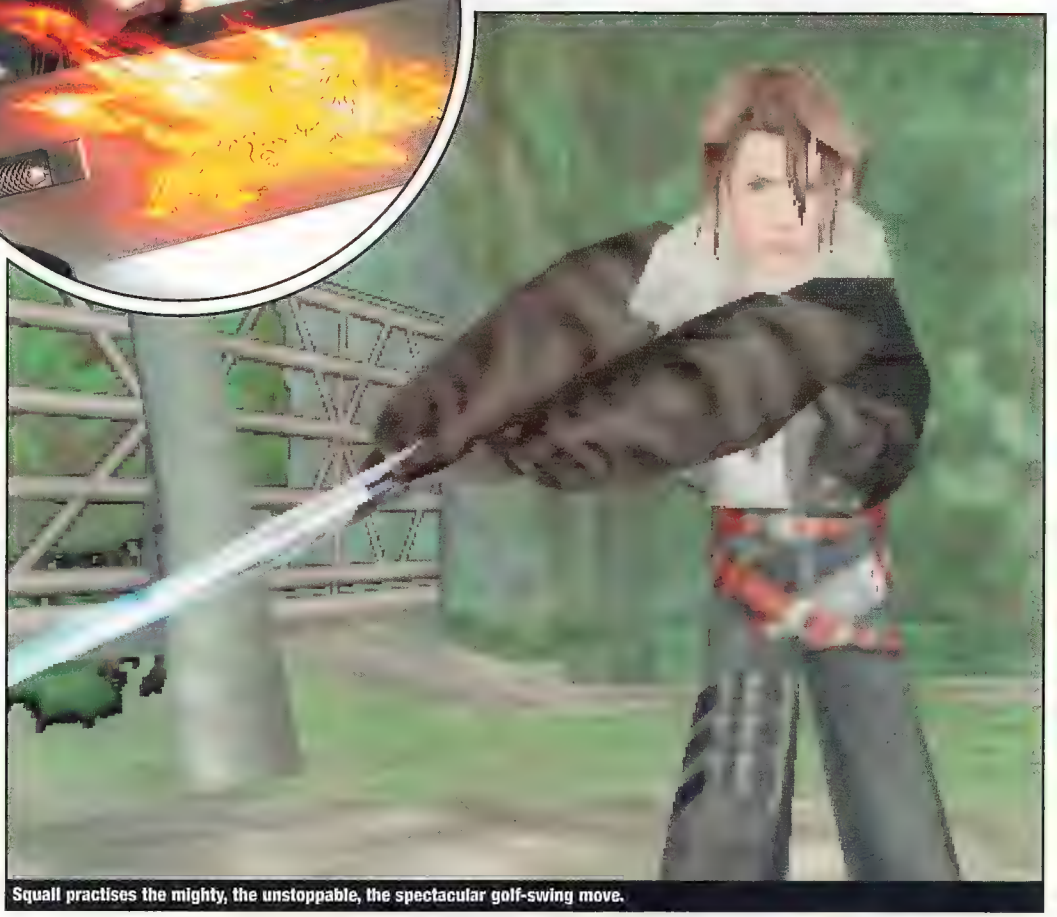
"In the finest *FF* tradition, the battle sequences are visually stunning, incredibly exciting and very moreish"



More pretty explosions than you can handle.



Take turns bashing each other, like in Bruce Lee films.



Squall practises the mighty, the unstoppable, the spectacular golf-swing move.

Beware of the rather exhibitionist GF.

worldwide appeal. The characters are much more stylised and westernised, closer to Hollywood than Manga.

FANTASY SEQUEL

This may be the follow-up to *VII*, but the story for it is brand new. This time round you play Squall Leonhart, a SeeD cadet caught in the middle of a war between two countries. A real stuck-up guy who always plays by the rules, his world changes when he meets Riona Heartilly (honestly, we didn't make these names up), who lives life to the full. Together they set out to end the war by defeating an evil sorceress.

It may not sound like much to start with, but the real beauty of *Final Fantasy* is the complexity of the ever-twisting tale and the amount of different characters you meet (some of whom join you) along the way. As we've come to expect, the cast is almost entirely made up of teenagers (whether virgins or not remains undisclosed), but then it is a fantasy after all. To keep hacks like us happy, one of the main characters, Laguna Loire, is a journalist, an ex-soldier who uses his mighty pen in battle. We've yet to see if he displays other characteristics of the trade, such as excessive drinking, freebie blagging and extreme nicotine addiction.

Thankfully, the fight sequences are as compelling as ever. In the finest *FF* tradition, the battle sequences are visually stunning, incredibly exciting (for a turn-based system, anyway) and very moreish – just as well, since they happen as regularly as in *VII*.

While there may not be as many sub-games this time around, there is a truly unique PC feature which will have your PlayStation mates kicking themselves in envy: Chocobo World. In Japan, this has appeared as a separate PDA game that allows you to acquire certain objects and abilities and then port them over to your console game. The rest of the world will only be able to play it on PC, as a separate Windows application where you control your own Chocobo. It might be extremely simple and low-res, but it promises to be lots of fun anyway.

PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED

There were a few things that made the PC *FFVII* a below-average conversion, such as the low quality of the FMV and not being able to customise the keys. For many people, the real drive of playing *FFVII* on the PSX was seeing what the next spectacular FMV sequence would bring – on PC, the movies seemed somewhat lifeless. That mistake has now been rectified and, if you can believe us, this time around they're even more breathtaking. As for the controls, they're completely customisable, so at least you'll know what to press.

There's no denying that this is still a PlayStation game through and through, but why should PC owners miss out on one of the greatest console titles of all time? PSX has got its *Quakes* and Dreamcast is getting its *Half-Life*, so we should stop being so snobbish and accept it for what it is. It's true that *FFVIII* is full of ideas that can't be fully explored on a console, and that it limits the creators' imagination. But all that should change with the next instalment and the next generation of consoles. In the meantime, this looks much better and works out cheaper than buying the PlayStation version and a copy of Bleem to run it on. PCZ

Q&A

KEVIN CHRISTENSEN

FFVIII software engineer extraordinaire, Kevin Christensen, shares his fantasies

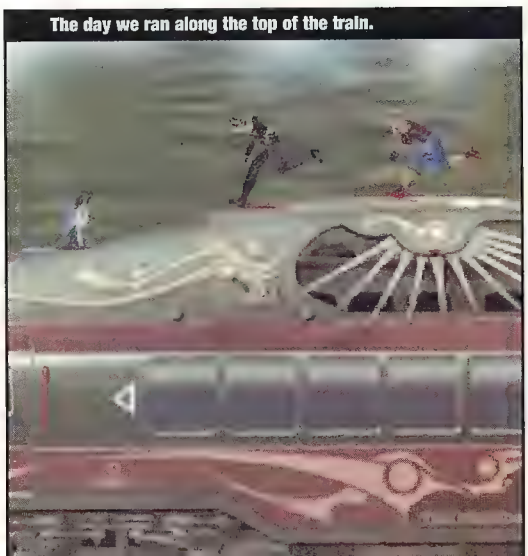
PCZ What's the first game you ever played?
KEVIN The first computer game was probably *Castle Wolfenstein* on the Apple.
PCZ And the best one?
KEVIN One of my favourites is *Jedi Knight.*
PCZ What's the last game you bought?
KEVIN I just pre-ordered *Ultima IX.* I can't wait to play it, but we have to get *FFVIII* finished first.
PCZ Ever been in a fight?
KEVIN I ejected a friend from my house for trying to stop me playing *Wing Commander.*

STONE JUNCTION

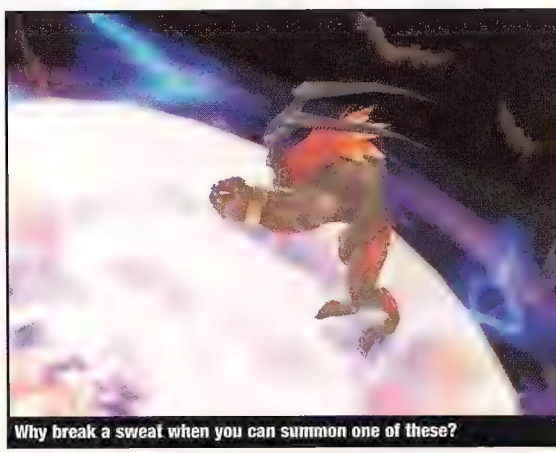
This new system hails a new turning-point for the series

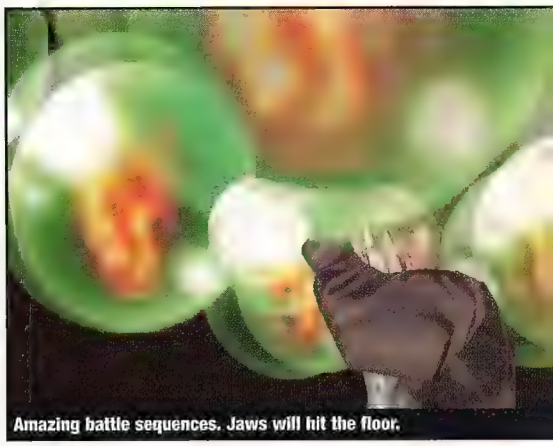
Your characters' growth will be controlled by a newly introduced Junction System. It looks complex to begin with, but after a few hours play it's bound to become second nature, especially after you realise that "junctioning" is just a fancy word for "equipping", whether its Guardian Forces (fabulously good-looking creatures that can be summoned with devastating effect), magic or abilities. You can draw magic from your enemies during battle and use it against them or to customise your stats for a short period. Anyone who's already mastered *FFVII* will pick this up in no time.

It's the road to hell. Also known as the M25.


The day we ran along the top of the train.

Look at his legs. That's gotta hurt. It's just not natural.


Why break a sweat when you can summon one of these?


Amazing battle sequences. Jaws will hit the floor.

Realism is the key in *Soldiers of Fortune*.

Big guns play their part, obviously.

Paranoid no-neck nutjobs of the world unite

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

All we are saying... is give peace a chance. Not that *Charlie Brooker* can hear us over the deafening sound of gunfire and screams of agony

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Activision
PUBLISHER Raven Software
WEBSITE www.activision.com
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Realistic ultra-violence, from the creators of *Hexen* and *Heretic*
- A blend of tactics and mayhem
- Hideous gore and authentic weaponry
- Based on a magazine aimed squarely at imbeciles

CV RAVEN

RAVENSOFT

These titles show Raven's pointy-hatted path to fame.

- ShadowCaster
- Heretic
- Hexen
- Necrodome
- Hexen II
  MageSlayer
  Take No Prisoners
- Heretic II

Imagine you could somehow physically grab hold of all the pleasantness in the world, all the chuckles and smiles and summer afternoon picnics, and then crumple and scrunch them into a compact metaphysical ball with your hard little fist. And then imagine yourself standing on a mountain, hurling said ball as far away as possible – clear over the horizon, so it disappears forever. What are you left with? A frightening environment filled with pain and anger and weeping and violence and, of course, lashings and lashings of hot, creamy death.

Welcome to the cheery kingdom of *Soldier Of Fortune*, a first-person shooter based on a sleazy, right-wing gun-love magazine. It's likely to whip every angry sociopath in the world into a state of extreme sexual arousal, and frankly this disturbs us.

Why? Well, mainly because we think the sort of people who read *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine are hateful, jar-headed scumbags. But also because we're dying for a go.

GUNS AND MORE GUNS

Soldier Of Fortune was bound to happen. It's the next logical step from the nation that brought the world the *Deer Hunter* (although it looks miles better than the notorious Bambi-slaying sim ever did): an action game designed to appeal to gung-ho US trailer trash and paranoid survivalists. You know the sort: all camouflage clothing, pick-ups and fag-bashing. They'll play the game in their makeshift bunkers, surrounded by hunting trophies and rifle racks, taking time out every 20 minutes to salute the flag and spit on a Saddam voodoo doll.

That's the down side. The up side is... well, there are two up sides. First of all, with any luck, it'll prove cathartic enough to prevent frustrated gun-hoarding lunatics from going gun-bonkers in the workplace. The *other* up side is that it – rather annoyingly – it looks like being a damn good game in its own right. Gah. There's no justice.

"We've been banging on for a while about the need for games set in believable, contemporary environments. This is precisely what *Soldier of Fortune* delivers"

AND YET MORE GUNS

Weirdly, *SOF* is being developed by Raven Software, previously better-known for pointy-hatted Merlin 'em ups like *Heretic* and *Hexen*. As stylistic turnarounds go, this is as shocking as Steps recording a cover version of *I Kill Children* by The Dead Kennedys. Well, almost.

Something we've been banging on about for a while now is the need for games set in believable, contemporary environments. This is precisely what *Soldier Of Fortune* delivers, and also what gives it its power to disturb. It's a million miles away from the bland Tolkien fantasy worlds of Raven's previous offerings: you're left in no doubt that this is planet Earth, Buster, and if you don't like it... well, you'll just have to lump it.

Part strategic manoeuvring, part barrel-smoking kill-a-thon, *Soldier Of Fortune* casts you as a highly trained international mercenary, killing for money with all the relish of a sadistic

Whoops. I just shot his head off.

Gratuitous blood and gore, close-up. Nice.

maniac. Inevitably, it all ends in tears and bursting ribcages.

The missions are almost uncomfortably contemporary: plenty of tinkering with pesky Eastern terrorists and wannabe nuke dealers, as you'd expect for a game whose origins lie in a xenophobic rag like *SOF* – but there's more surprising stuff, too, like a paranoiac-pleasing assassination run on a corrupt minister holed up in a makeshift fortress. All your Rambo fantasies rolled into one – well, apart from the sexual ones.

KILLING ME SOFTLY

Running on an almost rewritten version of the *Quake 2* engine, the game lays on the realism with a great big virtual trowel. First of all, the guns are reproduced in loving detail – *SOF* is at least partially aimed at weapons trainspotters after all. You'll need to deal with limited ammo (every shot counts, trigger-boy), frustratingly authentic reload rates and, for once, proper recoil (no physics-defying, *Quake*-a-licious, rocket launcher nonchalance *here*, wethinks).

To keep potential mass murderers happy, *Soldier Of Fortune's* toy cupboard practically overflows with different flavours of death: machine guns, sniper rifles, grenades... you name it, it's in here, and it's probably pointing in the face of someone a bit foreign.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GHOUL IN THE WORLD

These days, no game can be reported upon without at least one reference to a ridiculous acronym dreamt up by the developers to describe an otherwise dull feature of the coding, and hot diggety dawg, if *Soldier Of Fortune* doesn't make heavy usage of a bit of technological fizziness known as GHOUL. The GHOUL system apparently enables the programmers to create an incredibly realistic environment. Not only does everything show full respect for the laws of physics – even the boxes shatter in a realistic fashion – there's also admirable attention to detail. We're promised the ability to shoot the gun from an opponent's hand, but if you think it's more fun shooting off the hand itself, prepare to bellow with unwholesome delight because the loveable GHOUL system also caters for stomach-churningly lifelike gore.

If you winced at the merciless crowbar-clubbing action on display in *Kingpin*, maybe you should consider playing *SOF* with your eyes shut. Each character model is split into umpteen 'reaction zones', allowing goggle-eyed psychos to blow individual limbs off their enemies until their trousers stir with delight. You can shoot a man in the bollocks and laugh as he convulses in agony or burst his head like a watermelon and gasp as chunks of brain fly past your shoulder. Or do both, one after the other, should you be thus inclined.

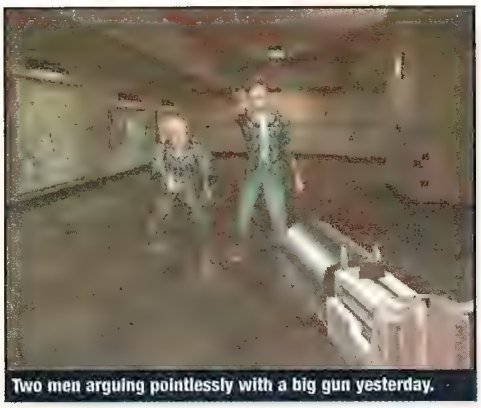
We rather expect the BBFC to take a somewhat dim view of this, although perhaps, in these apparently more lenient times, they'll pass it uncut and content themselves with rolling their eyes heavenward while sighing in a world-weary fashion.

BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM

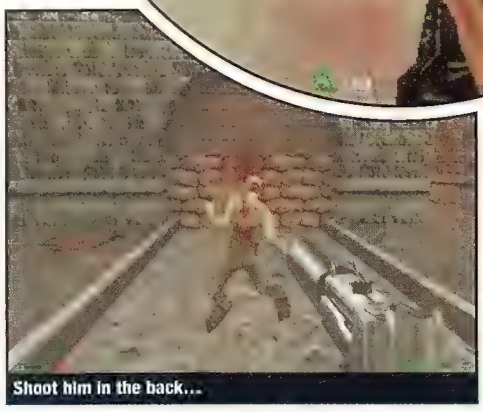
So what else is there? Well, aside from the usual believe-it-when-we-see-it promises about awe-inspiring artificial intelligence and multiplayer support, Raven are making much of the way the game's storyline unfolds – like a thriller, apparently – and also, intriguingly, of the occasional role-playing element at work beneath all that stubble and kevlar. Apparently, there's some degree of NPC interaction beyond picking whose head to blow off next: you'll be conversing with, and making judgements upon, a wide variety of different characters throughout the game.

All in all, it looks like being a definite contender – albeit a wilfully controversial one. Keep yer peepers primed for a full review in due course. And please *don't* subscribe to the *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine in the meantime.

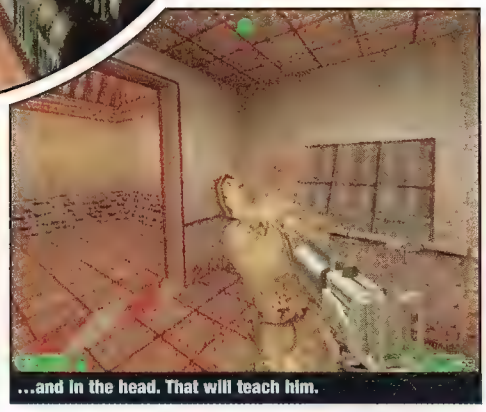
No. That would be wrong. PCZ



Two men arguing pointlessly with a big gun yesterday.



Shoot him in the back...



...and in the head. That will teach him.

This time, it really is a game of two halves...

EUROLEAGUE FOOTBALL

Arcade action and in-depth management in one game? *Steve Hill* goes to Madrid to kick around the idea

Ooh! Get yer swede on that.

Nwankwo puts his size 15s to good use.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Dinamic
PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive
WEBSITE www.vie.co.uk
OUT February 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- You can manage and play
- Features five different countries
- Comes with a quiz
- Lots of catering options

CV

DINAMIC

Known in this country for their *Premier Manager* games, they knocked out this triumvirate for Gremlin

- Premier Manager 97
- Premier Manager 98
- Premier Manager 99

In the old boots and laces world of the football simulation, every player knows you've got your arcade games and your management games. If you fancy a quick knockabout and the chance to slot in a few goals, you play an arcade game. If you've got time on your hands and want to mull over the complexities of the sweeper system while trawling the lower leagues for a promising youngster, you play a management game. As Windsor Davies maintained, Never the twain shall meet.

Except sometimes. The last game to really successfully combine the two disciplines was the impeccable *Sensible World Of Soccer*, offering an incredibly playable arcade game allied with a rudimentary squad system. You had some money, you could buy players, they sometimes got injured, they sometimes got suspended, and if the right offer came in you could flog them. No mess, no fuss, no hot dogs. It was extremely simplistic, but worked superbly and hardcore players could easily steam through 20 seasons before realising that the game was over and that they had the thumbs of a blind cobbler.

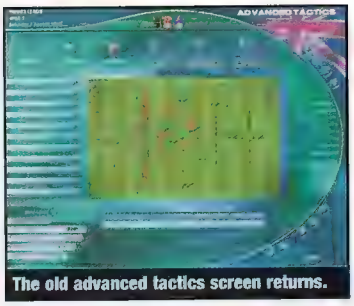
That was then and this is now. In these accelerated times, few people have a PC slow enough to run *Sensible* and, besides, have long since progressed to *FIFA*, the series finally getting it right over the last few incarnations. *FIFA 2000* again got it right, although it could hardly fail, being largely the same game as *FIFA 99*. However, one of the major additions was the introduction of a quasi-management section, enabling you to play consecutive seasons and bolster your squad with new signings. Unfortunately, the transfer system was so poorly realised as to render it worthless, enabling you to simply buy anyone within your budget, while ludicrously including players from the vintage teams. A wasted opportunity, if ever we've seen one. And as for *FA Premier League Stars*, well, it was a waste of a box.

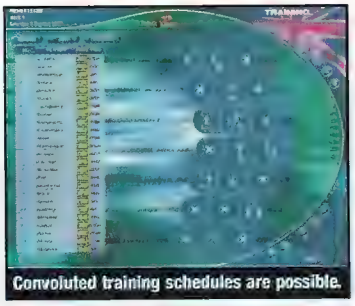
EX-GREMLIN

The perfect combination of arcade action and decent management still remains something of a Holy Grail then. Step forward *EuroLeague Football* from Spanish developers Dinamic. If you recognise the name, it's because they've been responsible for the last few titles. If you recognise the screenshots, it's because it's the

"You can now dive into the action on the pitch, taking control of the team with a joypad, testing your manual dexterity as well as your management acumen"

The board of directors now get involved.


The old advanced tactics screen returns.


Convoluted training schedules are possible.

I Kanu believe it.

What's this – Ginger Athletic?

same game. Or is it? As well as the obligatory updates, change of name and change of publisher (Virgin taking up the reins from the defunct Gremlin) there is one major difference. For the first time, this year's model lets you dive into the action on the pitch, taking control of the team with a joypad, thereby testing your manual dexterity as well as your management acumen.

It's a bold move, and one that won't necessarily rest easy with management purists. What's the point of tweaking your squad to the nth degree, only to cock everything up with a misplaced back pass because the phone rings? The balance will have to be just right, and players' on-pitch capabilities will have to accurately mirror their statistics – an onerous task considering the number of stats that go into a modern management game, this one included. *SWOS* worked because players only had a few stats, their abilities becoming immediately evident when playing the game. It's hard to see how a bank of numbers will be translated to the joypad and, frankly, we're none the wiser as our request for a quick dabble was flatly refused.

BOX CLEVER

What we can tell you is that if you don't want to get involved on the pitch, you don't have to. In fact, to all intents and purposes, you can simply scribble out *EuroLeague Football* on the box and write *Premier Manager 2000* in crayon. That's effectively what it is, and indeed it is being released in Spain as *PC Futbol 2000*, the eighth incarnation of the highly successful series. The Spaniards absolutely lap it up, and their version features commentary from ex-pat Michael Robinson, the striker who forged a career over here with the likes of Brighton, QPR and Liverpool, despite a palpable lack of talent. He is now a big noise in the Spanish media, despite an allegedly poor grasp of the native tongue.

The commentary for the UK version has yet to be confirmed, but we can tell you the game will feature the major leagues of England, Italy, Spain, France and Germany. Fairly thin on the ground compared to *Champ Manager*, you might think, but by their own admission Dinamic aren't trying to take on the master. Neither are they attempting to go up against *FIFA 2000*, and instead are attempting to offer a different experience that will appeal to fans of both, as well as the more casual punter. There's a chance it could fall between two stools, but there's also a possibility they could pull it off. We'll let you know the final score when it comes out next year. PCZ

Q&A

SIE BARLOW

Dinamic's token Englishman, and Madrid's token Man City fan

PCZ What's the first game that you ever played?

SIE First game I ever played… ooh, that's a tricky one… *Manic Miner.*

PCZ Fkin' hell, what a game.**

SIE I know, it's a great game.

PCZ What's the best game you've ever played?

SIE The best game would probably have to be *Kick Off 2.* I still think that is the standard for football games.

PCZ What was the last game you paid good money for?

SIE The last game I paid good money for was *Championship Manager 3.*

PCZ Are you still playing it? I still am.

SIE Yeah, I am, yeah. I still play it, yeah.

PCZ Have you ever had a fight?

SIE (Laughs) That is a superb question. Yes, I have indeed. I have indeed had a fight. The last fight I can remember was a very drunken one with an Irishman, and it wasn't pretty. It was in a pub, he was taking the piss out of the English. Obviously, I reacted badly, there was a bit of pushing and he was knocked on the floor.

PCZ Are you tempted to make Man City super-powerful, like *Champ Manager* did with Everton?

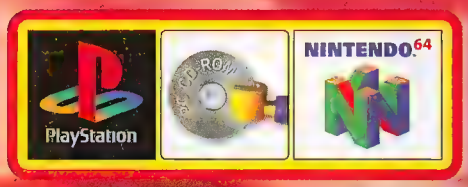
SIE You're always tempted to, but you can't do it, can you? It's not allowed.

PCZ Not even sneakily throw in a decent keeper or something?

SIE They have got a decent keeper, in all fairness. Nicky Weaver – the next England goalkeeper, mark my words.

Boredom to fun

in 0.5 seconds



Now available on PlayStation and N64

If you want to be LEGO Racing Champion,
you'd better READ THIS FAST.
Load the game. Pick a car. Test it.
Race it. Try building your own.
Race it in four worlds. Play on three formats.
Challenge your friends. Beat them.
Master 12 race circuits. Defeat history's greatest champions.
Then I'll be ready for you.
My name's Rocket Racer. And by the way,
YOU READ TOO SLOW.
I'm already a dot on the horizon.

GO FASTER.

LEGO RACERS

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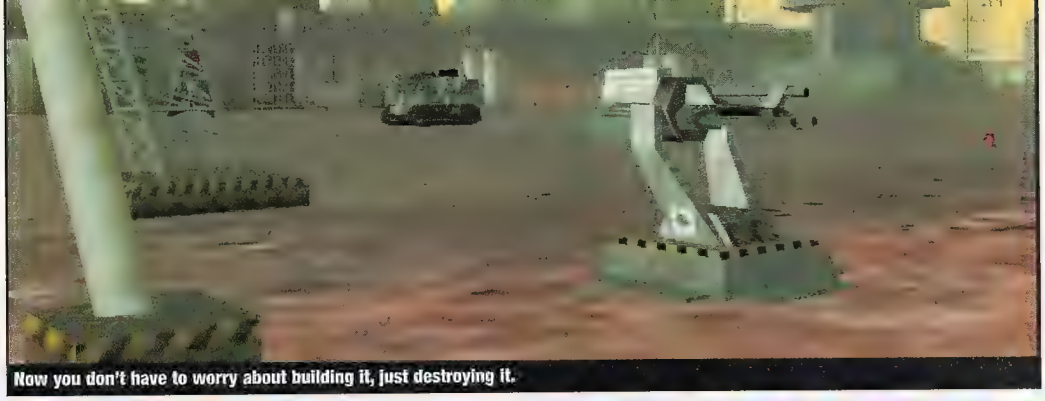

Now you don't have to worry about building it, just destroying it.

Major bomb to *Ground Control*. Ha, ha!

GROUND CONTROL

Real-time strategy without resource management! 'About bloody time!' says *Richie Shoemaker*

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Massive Entertainment
PUBLISHER Sierra
WEBSITE www.sierrastudios.com/games/groundcontrol
OUT Early 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Big on strategy, small on resource management
- Units can be customised before each mission
- Multiplayer modes new to real-time strategy
- It looks nice

FIRST ENCOUNTER

How long have we all been waiting around for a strategy game to offer something different for a change? Y'know, one where you actually spend most of your time fighting, rather then starting off with an invasion force consisting of three soldiers, a rocket-powered pushbike and a transit van that miraculously transforms into an impregnable fortress. If you're tired of building the same old buildings that churn out the same old units, *Ground Control* seems as though it could be worth the wait.

Previously known as *Genesis: Aperian 7*, *Ground Control* is the first game from Swedish (and probably very blond) outfit Massive Entertainment. It is, obviously, one of those new-fangled 3D real-time strategy games, and there is no – absolutely *no* – resource gathering or base building involved. Novel as it may sound, before each of the 30 missions you choose what units you want to take with you. Choose the wrong ones (three soldiers and a pushbike, say) and you're toast. Infantry, tanks, hoverbikes and planes make up most of what's on offer, all of which can be equipped with different weaponry, formed into squads and given formation orders – artillery at the rear and so on. Once your troops are ready to rumble and the map of the battlefield committed to memory, they are dispensed from their orbital stations to the planet below.

Because this is a squad-level game, individual units cannot be controlled directly. Rather like the criminally overlooked *Warhammer: Dark Omen* (*PCZ* 61, 85%), you instead move whole squads in whatever formation they currently occupy. Higher ground obviously gives you greater advantage in battle, allowing you to bombard the enemy from further away, or if you're feeling sneaky you could take the low ground and keep to the shadows, making your units harder to detect. Formations too will play an important role, especially as most units will have stronger forward armour and therefore the capacity to soak up more hits. Get yourself caught in a crossfire or outflanked by faster moving units and you could find yourself in a spot of trouble. If your units do make it through the mission, experience points will be lavished upon them, RPG style.

"It is, obviously, one of those new-fangled 3D real-time strategy games, and there is no – absolutely *no* – resource gathering or base building involved"

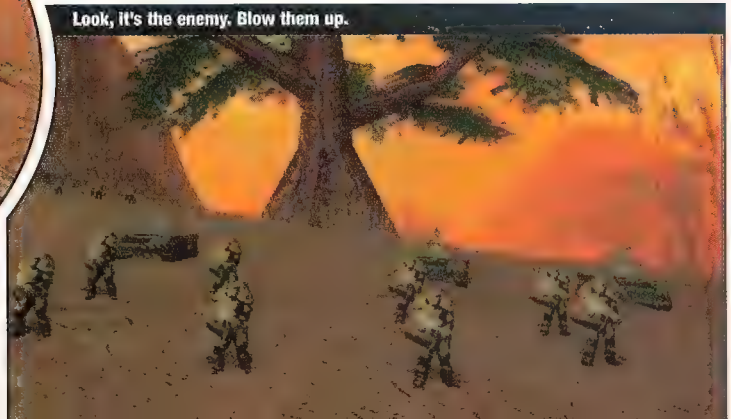
Of course, *Ground Control* will live or die depending on the computer intelligence and your units' ability to move in roughly the direction you want them to. But with the features outlined above, a 'gripping storyline' (that isn't) and multiplayer modes 'new to the genre', Massive Entertainment may find themselves on the frontline of a genre that's currently in fighting retreat. Let's hope they can turn things around. PCZ

There are two sides to choose from.

Bases can be heavily defended. And some have 24 hour BSkyB access.

Lots of pretty explosions dancing across the screen.

Zoom in on the action.


Look, it's the enemy. Blow them up.

California über alles?

This is over Hawaii apparently.

For a few days it was the tallest building in the world.

A spot of low-level flying.

You'll be taking on missions from various companies.

CRIMSON SKIES

Have Microsoft gone plane crazy? *Richie Shoemaker* hopes so

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/games/crimsonskies
OUT Mid-2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Bizarre aircraft and weaponry
- It's not a flight sim. Which is good
- Tried and tested engine offering plenty of aerial action
- Based on a board game that no-one's ever heard of

Looking at the exotic and bizarrely-styled aircraft on this page, it's obvious that *MechWarrior 3* developers Zipper Interactive have had way too much time on their hands. Between dice-rolling their way across the board game on which *Crimson Skies* is based and thumbing through old WWII books about experimental German aircraft, the artists have certainly been letting their imaginations run wild. In the real world half the damn things surely wouldn't even get off the ground, but thankfully *Crimson Skies* is set in a 1930s alternate reality – one in which booze is still off the menu and civil war is the main course.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Taking place above the North American continent, *Crimson Skies* sees you as a sort of gum-chewing Biggles, an ace pilot who craves both money and fame. Aviators are more popular than film stars, their vehicles as bloated and eccentric as only Americans could possibly love. With most of what was the USA at war with itself, the only real way of getting around is by air and it's also the only real means that allied states have to trade with each other. As a 'freelance aviator', your job varies between taking down giant zeppelins as a hired pirate and accompanying the inflated behemoths as an escort. You work for anyone who'll take you on.

Mission-based, *Crimson Skies* is certainly less of a simulation than most flight games. In fact, we're told it's action all the way. The game can be played from a first-person cockpit view, or in third-person with the camera behind your aircraft. Over 30 different aircraft will be in the game, with just as many weapons, and you'll be able to set up your own weapons configurations before each mission.

> **"As a 'freelance aviator', your job varies between taking down giant zeppelins as a hired pilot and accompanying the inflated behemoths as an escort"**

Using a modified version of the *MechWarrior 3* engine (which must have been heavily tweaked if you take into account that *Mech 3* was entirely ground-based), *Crimson Skies* should offer unparalleled ground detail, with plenty of air-to-ground action as well as more typical dogfighting. Because of the designs of some of the planes, we can expect far more variety in gameplay than in more traditional prop-based sims; some fighters offering ridiculous speeds by trading off wide turning circles. There will be tight-arsed hardcore sim fans who are bound to scoff – those who preach endlessly about realism – but we think it's about time someone injected a bit of fun into the flight sim genre and *Crimson Skies* looks like just what the doctor ordered. Rest assured we'll be first in line for a prescription. PCZ

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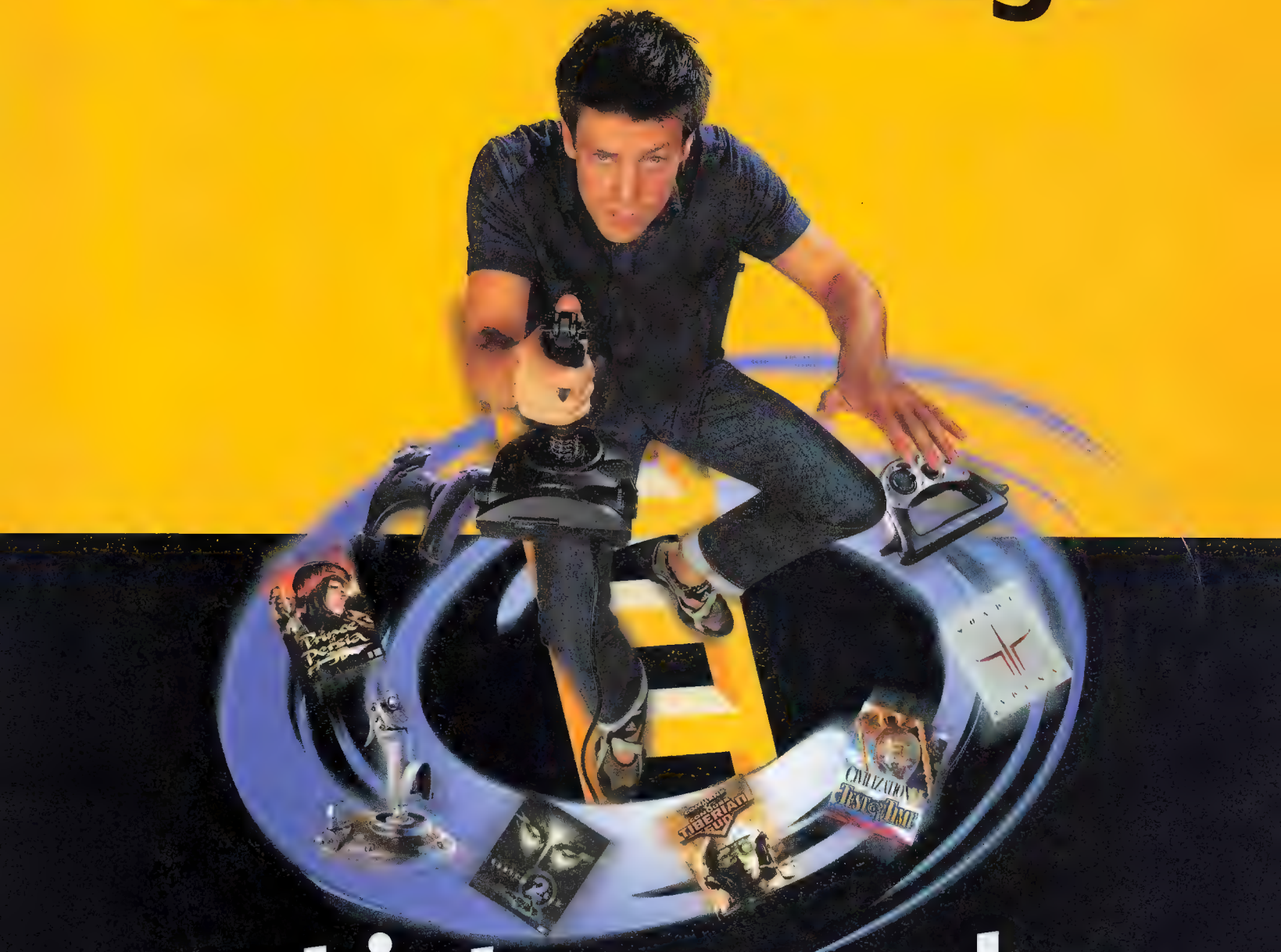

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THE LONGEST JOURNEY

FIRST ENCOUNTER

After struggling for hours thinking of a pun, *Mark Hill* decides to take the short route and write the damn preview.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Funcom
PUBLISHER TBA
WEBSITE www.funcom.com
OUT Spring 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's an adventure game for crying out loud
- Intricate plot
- Massive, detailed settings
- Mixture of puzzles, interaction and action

EM Forster (the author of Howard's End and A Passage to India) once wrote a novel called The Longest Journey. Luckily though, this adventure game isn't based on it. Otherwise we'd be falling asleep within minutes, as some pathetic graphics and dense dialogue depicts a world of disconnected lives, social chasms, people having tea and discussing property prices as a metaphor for the modern soul. Instead, we can look forward to a highly sophisticated and beautiful looking title that promises to breathe new life into the adventure genre.

"The amount of detail that has gone into the creation of both worlds, their inhabitants, culture and history is astounding and gives players an unrivaled freedom"

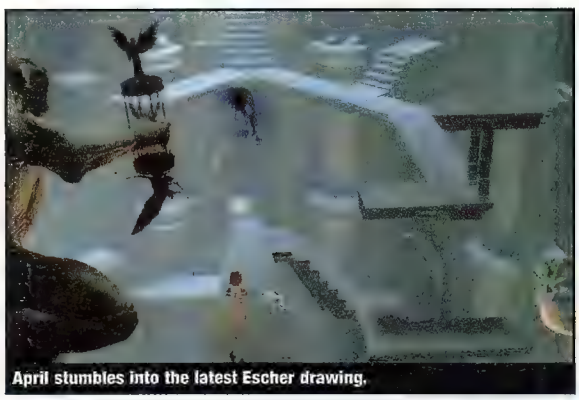
Okay, so the developers are European (Norwegian to be more exact), but when we said 'sophisticated' we didn't mean pompous, boring or a triumph for style over content, as is sometimes the case with these things. In fact, we're looking forward to a well-formed story that slips in some action sequences with meaty brain teasers (although not quite displaying the insane degree of ambition seen in *The Nomad Soul*).

You play the role of April Ryan, a slender teenage girl (well, you don't get many guys called April) who carries the fate of the Universe in her hands. The game revolves around two very different worlds: Stark, the world of Science; and Arcadia, the world of magic. There is a delicate balance between them which keeps the universe from hurtling into chaos. And that is exactly where it's heading, since one of the Guardians of Balance (bear with us) has up and lifted. Good thing that April is a Shifter, then, one who can switch between both worlds. A journey which, if the title is to be believed, is rather lengthy.

The amount of detail that has gone into the creation of both worlds, its inhabitants, culture and history is quite astounding and gives players an unrivaled freedom, rarely seen in a game these days. There'll be over 150 locations to explore, brimming with characters to interact with and puzzles to get your grey muscles straining. But despite the enormity of the environments and the independence you'll be granted, the story will always be there to drive the whole thing along.

Considering the current state of adventure games, we're salivating at the prospect. Knowing that Funcom have professed their admiration for the likes of *Monkey Island* and *Grim Fandango*, this should be a trip worth going on. PCZ

Would you trust him to take you where you wanted?


April stumbles into the latest Escher drawing.

Nice friendly citizens for you to talk to.

The heroine is an artist, apparently.

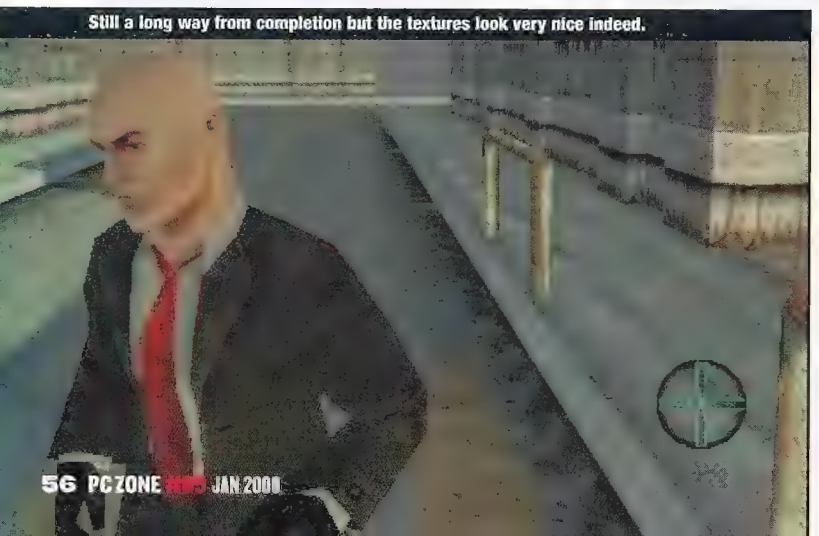
"There's plenty more fish in the sea..."

April runs down 'Token Afro-American Culture Street'.

Signor Vialli walks into the Chelsea players' bar after one of Dennis Wise's little 'tricks'.

Nice bit of pointing on the brickwork. Shame our unconscious friend can't appreciate it.

These nifty Hover Shoes™ exclusive to *Hitman*, one supposes.



Still a long way from completion but the textures look very nice indeed.

HITMAN

What kind of demented sicko would want to take on the role of a cold-blooded killer? Stand up, *Mark Hill*

FIRST ENCOUNTER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER IO Interactive
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
WEBSITE www.eidos.co.uk
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Accurate topography featuring real-life locations and architecture
- 3D sound is an integral part of the whole gaming experience
- Advanced AI on NPCs
- Bloody, immersive and chilling progressive plot
- At last we can live out our own sick fantasy of being a hitman

What a life, eh? Lounging around on roofs, popping off heads of state with high-powered sniper rifles; waltzing into media tycoons' mansions and pumping them full of bullets while hysterical blood-splattered children run screaming for the door... The sheer joy and thrill of being a world-class hitman is unparalleled.

And guess what? Eidos are about to open the door of debauchery by allowing us to live out these evil fantasies for ourselves in a new third person perspective action/adventure.

"AI will be one of the game's strong points. Instead of simply having drone enemies, your foes will see, hear, speak and interact fully with their environment"

Oh yes, *The Daily Mail* and other truth-and-justice-seeking tabloids will have a field day. Obviously, as far as we're concerned, the purely fictional world of the video game can be as twisted as it likes, and indeed, the gore content of *Hitman* appears to be adequate for the most devout Lee Harvey Oswald acolyte.

Of course, sensationalism and blood are often all you need to sell a game, and *The Mail* and *The Mirror* can kick up as much 'sick and evil' dirt as they like – any publicity is good publicity. But what gamers really want to know is: will it actually be any good? Well, on the premise that what we've seen is a cross between *Thief: The Dark Project* and *Rainbow Six*, the signs seem to indicate that it's going to be everything we could have hoped for.

There are more than 20 real-life locations to explore, with realistic architecture and accurately digitised environmental sounds, such as the distant rumble of cars on a nearby motorway, or the delicate sounds of children playing downstairs.

LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY

All this acoustic flamboyance is not just for show, either. Like *Thief*, you have to carefully ascertain whether the room you're about to enter is actually empty, or packed full of trigger-happy security guards who've already sussed your own clumsy approach.

However, unlike *Thief*, you don't have to rely on arrows to do the dirty deed. A whole lethal range of shooters is available to you, and once the storyline begins to reveal the true reason behind your anti-social behaviour, you'll find even bigger and messier weapons at your disposal.

Developer IO has promised 'a major twist in the plot'. We already know that part of the progressive story revolves around 'revolutionary genetic experiments', so the chances are the whole thing's going to kick off into a kind of *Resident Evil* zombie/horror-affair.

Artificial intelligence will also be one of *Hitman*'s strong points. IO have revealed that instead of simply having drone enemies, your foes will see, hear, speak and interact fully with their environment. They'll pick up vases, bottles, chairs and anything else that can hurt a man, or seriously hinder his progress. Hell, they'll even converse with other unsavoury characters to co-ordinate ambushes and similar devious traps. Clever, very clever indeed.

Look out for more very soon, and in the meantime don't forget to watch Luc Besson's brilliant film *Leon*. Now *that*'s a hitman... PCZ

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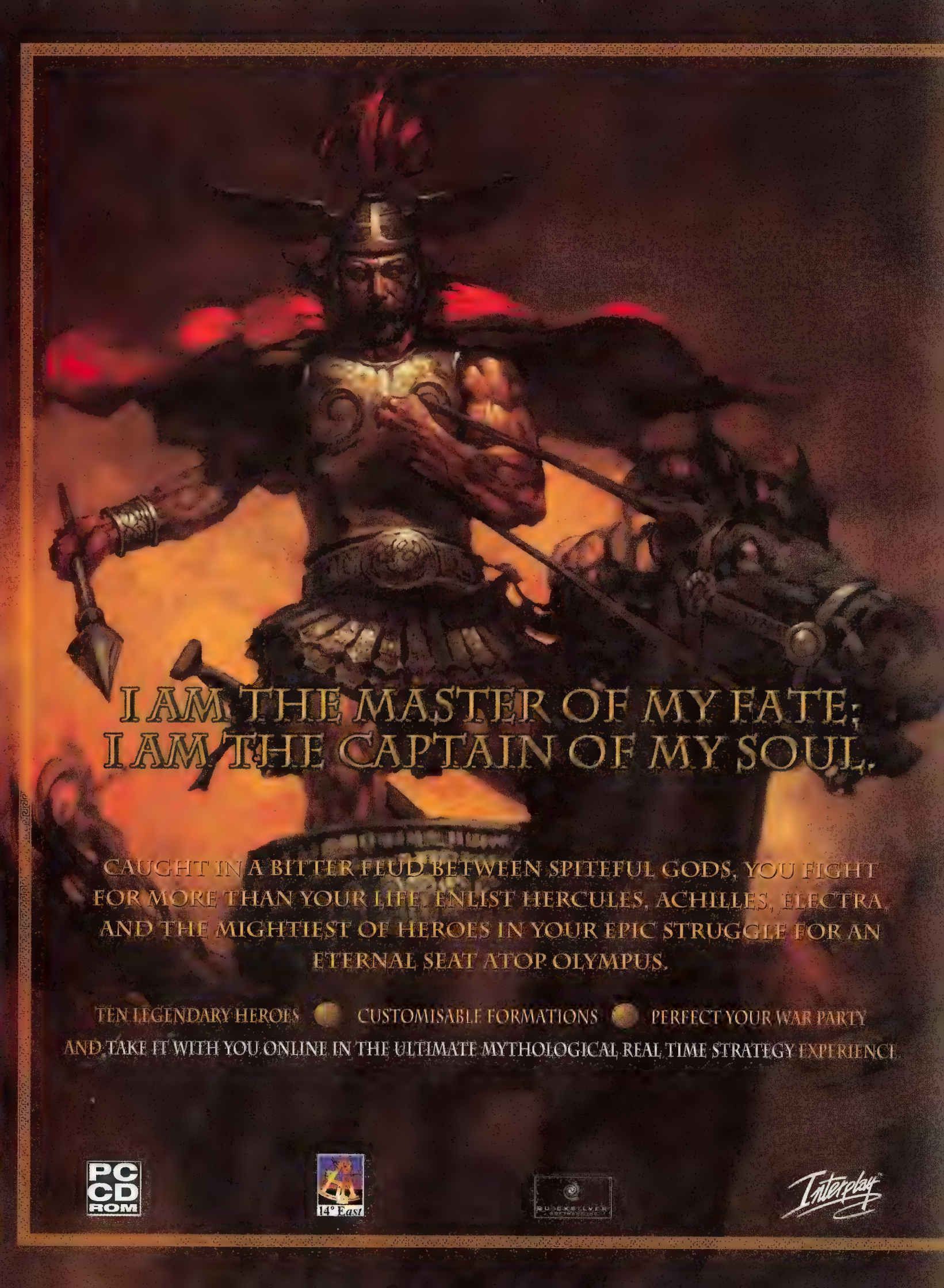
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I AM THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL.
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UNDER THE
BLUDGEONINGS
OF CHANCE

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BUT UNBOWED.

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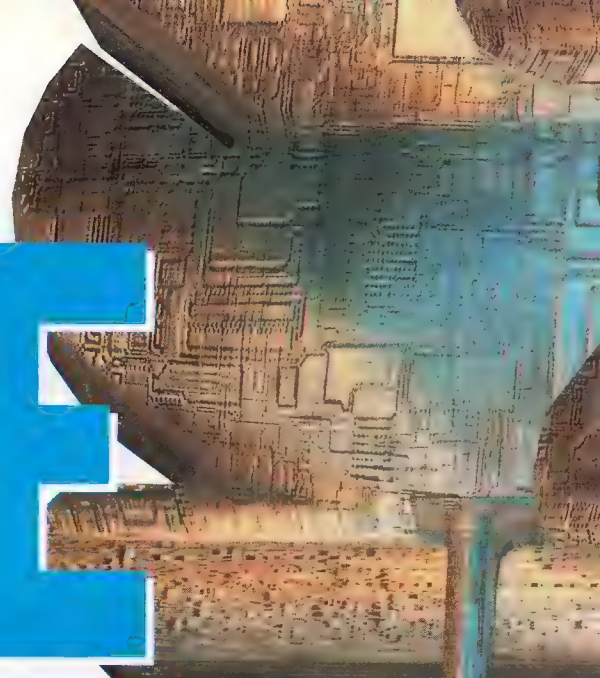
OBSESSED WITH ELITE



Still gagging for that classic sci-fi game that's nearly 20 years old? Get over it! "No bloody chance!" says one wee chap from Scotland...

WORDS Adam Philips

CASE HISTORY

PHOTOS Simon Clay

#19 THE THARGOID LOVER

NAME Paul Johnstone

AGE 20

LOCATION Fife, Scotland

OCCUPATION About to begin a Computing degree course

OBSESSION A devoted follower of the classic sci-fi epic *Elite* that debuted on the ancient BBC Micro computer.

CONDITION BEGAN Been addicted ever since: "Seeing those lovely wire-frame Cobra Mk IIIs cavorting round my TV screen to the sound of the *Blue Danube*."

HISTORY OF CONDITION A long term fan, Paul's still so mad about the game that he's now programming an update – *Elite Legacy* – which should splash down on his site soon.

OUTLOOK Well, if he's the one who finally brings *Elite* to a new generation of gamers, let's hope he never gets better...

The rapidly approaching turn of the century seems to have driven us poll-crazy. The top 100 films of the century. The top 100 songs of the century. The top 100 chat-up lines while standing in the queue at Tescos holding a pair of melons *(You're making this up, it was Sainsbury's – Ed)*. If gamers were asked what their favourite game of all time is, 'researchers' would soon discover that there's a particular breed who would pass *Half-Life* by, turn their noses up at the likes of *Command & Conquer* and burst into cynical giggles at the very thought of Lara Croft making it anywhere near their Top 100. Indeed, this breed are more likely to go very quiet, look at you in the same way Hannibal Lector eyes his victims, and utter one single word – "Elite".

If there was ever a game that has spawned a following that is more a sacred cult than a community, then *Elite* is that title. Launched on the BBC Micro in the early Eighties, it was an instant hit. Understandably (back then at least), people fell in love with the sci-fi odyssey that let star-struck players indulge in space exploration, trading and blasting pirates or, better still, the cops.

The game's creators Ian Bell and David Braben became computerland's first real programming heroes. While the game has spawned sequels and has been converted to every imaginable platform over the years (even the Gameboy), many argue that no other space sim has matched the splendour and purity of the first *Elite* since its debut all those years ago.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, even some of the most die-hard fans have grown tired of waiting for *Elite 4* (See 'Top Guns' boxout) to surface and have taken matters into their own hands. One such slave to sci-fi is Scottish bloke Paul Johnstone who has been working on *Elite Legacy*, a late Nineties revamp of the classic. "*Elite* is my favourite game of all time," states Paul without hesitation. "The main appeal for me is the sheer scale of it – one look at the galactic map and you're in awe of just how many star systems there are to explore. When you realise that there are eight more of these galaxies, each equal in size to the first, you just can't fail to be impressed by the magnitude of Bell and Braben's creation."

Indeed *Elite* is still, even by today's standards, a massive game. But once you scrape away those crusty white stains of nostalgia – it does all look rather crap now, doesn't it? "It is badly in need of a successor," chides Paul. "Quite simply, I thought that if I didn't make it, no one else would. Every time a company has attempted it, they have always missed some element which just ruins the whole thing – cases in point being *Privateer*, which had a plot, and *Hardwar* which was restricted to one teensy-weensy planet and again had a plot with a definite conclusion."

A wee bit harsh *PC ZONE* thinks but, hey! This kind of slavish love for the seemingly perfect *Elite* means that Paul's so committed to his remake project that he's undertaking the entire task all by himself – unlike some of the other *Elite* updates on their way (see 'Top Guns' boxout). At the moment he's doing all the sound, texture art, programming, and modelling himself: "It's definitely a labour of love," explains Paul. "From the start, I wanted to do this myself as I know from bitter experience with various abortive *Quake* and *Quake 2* mods, how hard working with a person you can't see is, as well as how unreliable other people can be. Besides, if I do it on my own, I can stick the font size of my name up a few notches in the credits!"

That's not to say that the rest of the Internet community hasn't helped him out from time to time – the *Elite Legacy* website regularly posts pleas for advice and people are more than happy to help out. Even those working on their own *Elite*

"I thought that if I didn't make the sequel to *Elite*, no one else would. Every time a company has attempted it, they've missed some element which ruins the whole thing"

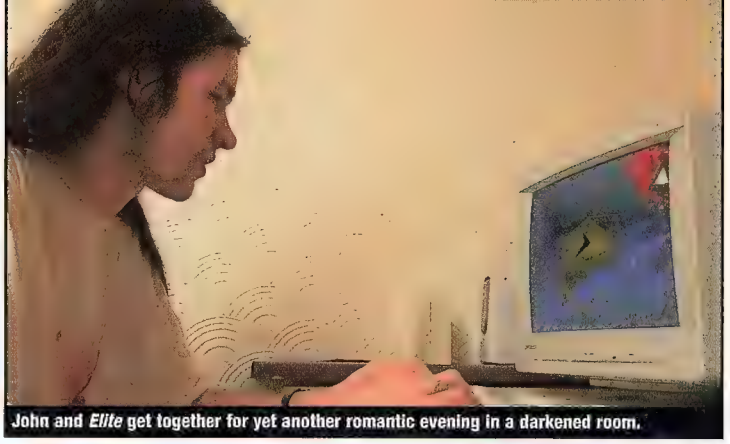
PAUL JOHNSTONE, SINGLE-HANDEDLY DEVELOPING *ELITE 2*

Would you trust this man with your sequel?

updates. It's perhaps a sure sign that the desire to see a true update is more important to *Elite*'s 'remake' community than who does it first.

If there is such a level of demand for a modern-day *Elite*, why does Paul think that none of the pros have yet to cash in on this over-looked genre? "I think that a development company would view the production of a free-form, plotless space sim with a ridiculously high learning curve as a bad move," argues Paul. "Simply because the majority of players are too easily disheartened when they die for the tenth time at the same point in a level. For instance, manual docking in *Elite* is ridiculously hard for a newbie – if *Elite* was released now, most players would probably throw it in the bin in disgust the first time they tried to dock at Leesti."

You wouldn't be wrong in assuming that Paul is a tad disillusioned with the new breed of gamesplayers. "I believe that modern players need a plotline to lead them by the hand," he explains. "They need to be told: 'You have to go here, buy this, kill this guy and come back.' The concept of 'freeform, go wherever you like, do what you want' died with the last platform port of *Elite*."


John and *Elite* get together for yet another romantic evening in a darkened room.

"The concept of 'freeform, go wherever you like, do what you want' died with the last port of *Elite*"

PAUL JOHNSTONE, WHO AIMS TO BRING *ELITE* TO A NEW GENERATION

The only *Elite*-style game that has caught Paul's attention is *X – Beyond The Frontier*, but he has his reservations about that little beaut as well – while he reckons it had a "good stab at the concept", the young upstart, "didn't quite cut it for us cynical, jaded and old *Elite* fanatics".

So, Mr Hyper Difficult To Please, how would you like to see the genre develop over the next, say, ten years? "I think the main step forward is going to be *Ultima Online*-style multiplayer experiences. With the arrival of ISPs offering 0800 numbers at certain times, games which focus heavily on their multiplayer aspects (such as *Ultima Online*, *Quake 3 Arena*, *Unreal Tournament*, *etc*) have become viable in the UK."

Mmm, not a bad premise and from the sounds of it, our Paul is going to be trying his hardest to make sure he's there when it happens – he's about to start an honours degree in Computing and intends to get a job at a software company some day. Perhaps David Braben's Frontier Developments would be a good place to start.

After all, they are working on *Elite 4*...

TOP GUNS

New to this *Elite* lark? Want to plunge head first into a genre that has captured the imagination and minds of so many punters?

PAST

Frontier: Elite 2 & Frontier First Encounters
While initially hampered by bugs, the two sequels were nevertheless decent enough but suffered from awkward flight dynamics...

HardWar
A very credible *Elite*-style sim set on a single planet. Our only gripe is that it's a tad short-lived when compared to the endless possibilities of its illustrious forefather...

Privateer 2: The Darkening
Paul may be a tad non-plussed because of its plot-driven gameplay but we still reckon that *Privateer 2* is one of the best space combat and trading sims out there. It's now on budget, so go and buy it!

Battlecruiser 3000AD
Another space odyssey which, according to its creator Derek Smart, was originally released too early by the publisher and its gameplay was subsequently ruined by bugs. Derek was so passionate about the game though that he went on to code an updated version all by himself. He's subsequently produced a further two versions. Point your browser to www.bc3000ad.com

PRESENT

X – Beyond the Frontier
It's official: we love this game. A highly credible attempt at creating an *Elite* for the late Nineties and one we recommend you rush out and buy immediately...

FUTURE

Millennium 3
(www.anti-matter.clara.net/) Not strictly a mere update of *Elite* but nonetheless, a space-based shoot 'em up and trading game being produced by a bunch of enthusiasts. An alpha version is available for download.

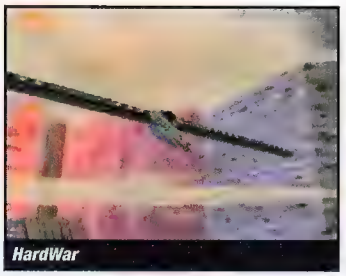
Freelancer
Basically, it's *Privateer* for 2000 and the buzz surrounding the game is very good. Keep an eye out for it!

The Elite Project
(www.jades.org/tep/) Another attempt by a group of *Elite* fans to update the golden oldie.

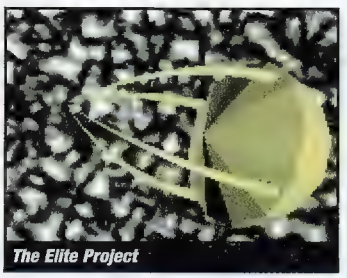
Terminus
The keenly anticipated space RPG set in our very own solar system 200 years in the future.

Elite 4
The official fourth instalment is being penned by David Braben and his bods at Frontier. More details soon...

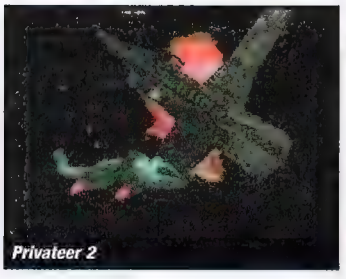
Frontier: First Encounters


HardWar

Battlecruiser 3000AD


The Elite Project

Frontier: Elite 2


Privateer 2

X – Beyond The Frontier

Terminus

Just look at *Elite*'s original graphics. Feast your eyes on the game's various boxes – feeling nostalgic? Worried that you may never see such excitement contained in such 'small' boxes again? Don't be so silly...

THE BEST OF THE BEST?

You decide – we asked Paul to list the new features that are going to be appearing in his new spin on the ancient classic

UPDATED GRAPHICS

- Texture mapping for all in-game models
- Bump mapping if the user's card supports it
- Environment mapping for 'shiny' ships
- Mip-mapping just "because I like mapping"
- Ambient and dynamic lighting
- "Lovely" smoke and gas particle effects for ship exhausts
- Gaseous nebulae effects

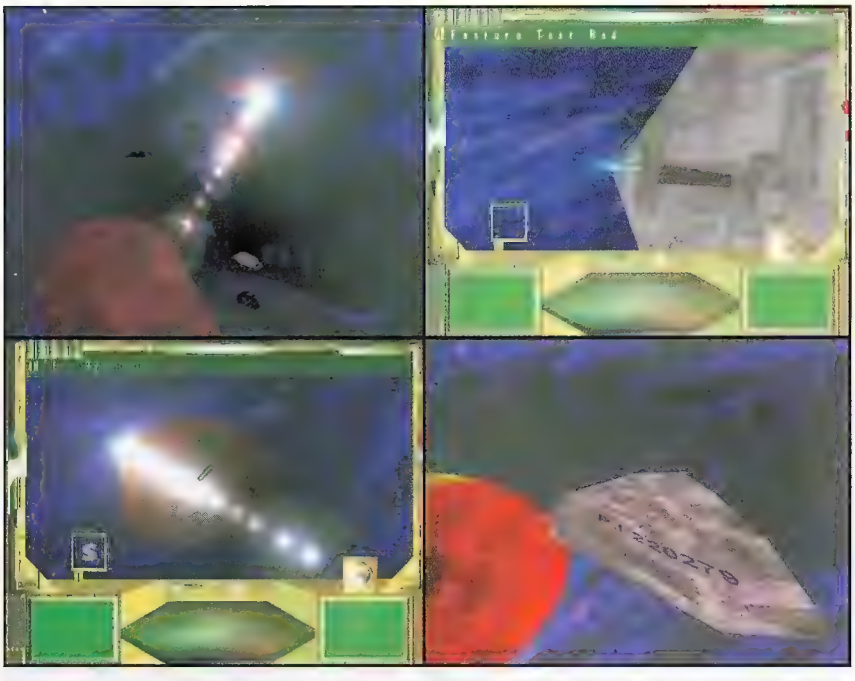
UPDATED SHIP AI

All the ships you encounter in the game will have a purpose and a motive. Some will be friendly while others will be aggressive. Also, some will appear friendly but are just looking to nick cargo and send you to a zero-G grave at the first opportunity. "Players will really have to have their wits about them when plying their trade," says Paul.

MULTIPLAYER

"If you think of *Ultima Online* in space, you wouldn't be far wrong," explains Paul. "If I can pull it off (and there is no reason why I can't), then players will be able to form pirate fleets, haulage companies, gangs of bounty hunters and squadrons of fighters to fend off the evil Thargoid menace. Or do just about anything they want."

For more info, visit the Elite Legacy *site at www.dalgety-bay.freeserve.co.uk*



The work-in-progress *Elite Legacy* – Paul's updated version of *Elite*. The graphics shown here are from his earlier work – the Direct X graphics aren't available yet because he's still working on the engine.

Q&A

BRABEN'S AND BELL'S END...

...of the stick. PC ZONE *asked David Braben and Ian Bell, the original designers of* Elite, *for their views on the online activities of their number one fans...*

DAVID BRABEN

PCZ Do you approve of other people taking your game and creating an unofficial sequel or an update?

DAVID BRABEN There are a lot of issues that come in to play when approving other people to do unapproved sequels from a legal standpoint – it compromises the rights from the publisher's point of view. The scene itself is similar to tribute bands in music – commercially they may cause a lot of legal headaches but it is actually quite an honour!

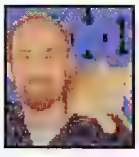
PCZ What plans do you have to help enthusiasts overcome these legal shenanigans though?

DB What I want to do is to create 'The Elite Club'. The idea would be that you could sign up as a member and one of the benefits of being a member is that you could get to tinker with the *Elite* code. You would then have the right to give away or sell the tribute game – as long as it carries The Elite Club banner. Everyone gets what they want but it doesn't compromise the legal situation with producing sequels, because they are legally undertaken by club members and the club has a licence to do it.

PCZ Which of the *Elite* series will be made available?

DB If The Elite Club does happen, *Frontier: Elite 2* and *Frontier: First Encounters* will be made available. As for *Elite* itself, I can't say at the moment due to legal issues.

For more info on The Elite Club, go to www.frontier.co.uk/eliteclub.html



IAN BELL

PCZ Do you approve of other people taking your game and creating an unofficial sequel or an update?

IAN BELL In principle, yes. I wouldn't be happy to see any more rubbish sequels but, if people do a good job, I'd be delighted.

PCZ What do you think of the work you have seen so far?

IB It's particularly gratifying to see the work that programmers have put in to get *Elite* running on various emulators. Other projects I'm looking forward to are the from-scratch remakes such as *Elite Platinum* and *Elite Legacy*. The latter promises to include all the missions from all previous versions of the game.

Many of the versions coded by other programmers, including the Spectrum and MSX versions, had completely different mission sets to the original 6502 *Elite* family (BBC, C64, Apple, NES, etc), so it will be nice to see them all brought together. It will be interesting to see if they can co-exist in the same galaxy without running into each other!

PCZ What about the copyright issues involved?

IB Some elements of *Elite* drew heavily on the *Traveller* and *Space Opera* RPGs, so it would be hypocritical to complain about their copyright being infringed. Others, such as simulated 3D space combat, though original, were just obvious. Perhaps the most distinctive and original feature was the 3D scanner, and though I did feel a bit peeved when that was first copied directly, it now seems to be standard in 3D space games eg *Conflict Freespace*, *G-Police*, *Freelancer*, etc.

As for copying, emulating or modifying the game as a whole, I personally do not have a problem with this provided it is non-commercial – which so far it has been. And since the only way you can buy *Elite* currently is on an unlicensed budget re-release from a pirate publisher, free copies don't cause any lost royalties. I know some website bulletin boards have received legal threats for carrying *Elite* with emulators. Though technically this may be an infringement, as there is no profit or damage to legitimate sales, a copyright owner trying to sue would most likely get zero damages and a large legal bill...

For more info on where to get your hands on the various incarnations of Elite, *drop in on Yikes Station! (www.yikesstation.freeserve.co.uk/frontier/yikes.htm). Ian's homepage can be found at www.iancgbell.clara.net*

PC ZONE REVI

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first –

THE PC ZONE GAMES SYSTEM

This is the machine we use to review new titles on. Our reviewers also use older machines to get an impression of gaming in the 'real' world, but this is what we currently consider the best 'value-for-money' set up. As games become more demanding, the specs will change to reflect that.

At the heart of the machine is a 600MHz AMD Athlon processor. These babies are seriously scorching, optimised for 3D applications, so first-person shooters fly like you wouldn't believe. Faster Athlons are now available, but at the present prices, this is probably the best value for money of the family. The system bus runs at 200MHz (er… fast) so basically the whole thing is like a supercar with no brake pedal.

Supporting the processor is a MaxiGamer Xentor 32 from Guillemot, purveyors of all things graphic-y. Based on the TNT2 chipset, these RAM-packed beasties are designed to cope with the polygons, textures and special effects that those game developers insist on chucking at the screen. Guillemot have a new GeForce 256-based card in the offing, which we're hoping to upgrade to soon.

Pionex have supplied the cases and 128Mb of PC100 memory for the motherboard. For gaming, especially with RAM prices as they are at the time of writing, 128Mb is the optimum amount. The cases have plenty of room for expansion without taking up excessive space. Nifty floppy slot as well…

Hard drive services are provided by the stunning 7,200 rpm, 20Gb Maxtor DiamondMax Plus (from the 5120 family of drives). It's large and fast: plenty of room for full installs and quick to load games when you want to play them.

Sound services are supplied by VideoLogic. The SonicVortex 2 card is a PCI device featuring Aureal A3D 2.0, ideal for gamers. The latest drivers are stunning, using the card's own chip to reduce the processing overhead on the CPU when calculating 3D audio. Aureal's API now handles not only sounds themselves but also their reflections: as you approach a doorway, you can hear sounds from the room reflected into the corridor. Immersive stuff.

VideoLogic also supply speakers from the superb Scirocco range. We use primarily Crossfires for gaming – they may seem expensive, but you get twice the quality you pay for. Four satellite speakers and a humungous subwoofer give pinpoint accuracy for 3D audio and bass meaty enough for the rumbliest explosions. We also use other speakers from the range (the original Scirocco and new Scirocco Pro) for sound card testing.

Guillemot's DVD Theater setup provides not only the ability to load games quickly, but also to watch DVD movies (essential for reviewing games – not) with its bundled MPEG decoder card.

Peripherals are supplied by Microsoft, from USB mice (top-notch for first-person shooters) through the full force-feedback monty – joysticks and driving wheels – to the ubiquitous Sidewinder gamepads.

Last but certainly not least are headphones from Philips (when the others in office are suffering from Scirocco overkill) and fabulous 17inch Brilliance monitors (107Bs). If you're used to the cheaper monitors typically bundled with new PCs, the crispness and stability of the image displayed on these comes as quite a shock.

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at *ZONE* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our writers are the most experienced and talented reviewers in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre and they won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We also want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we've got our Feedback section on page 118. This is where you have the opportunity to get your point of view into *PC ZONE*. If you've got a comment to make, then we want to hear it.

CHECK THE SPECS!

The standard spec machine these days is a P233 with 32Mb of memory – but before buying any game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the technical specs on packaging can sometimes be a little optimistic to say the least, make sure you check out the 'We say' bit in our tech specs box at the start of reviews. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, then we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call

Acclaim 0171 344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** 01604 232200 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315550 • **Eidos Interactive** 0181 636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01753 549442 • **Empire Interactive** 0208 343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 0208 222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 0181 569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 0171 551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0181 242 1000 • **Mindscape** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 0171 405 1777 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 722900 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 0181 944 9300 **Zablac** 01626 332233

REVIEWS

we'll tell you which games you've got to buy, and which you've got to avoid.

REVIEWS A-Z

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WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% Here at *ZONE* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives a score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC ZONE* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not a fan of the genre.

80-89% Games that score 80-89% get the *PC ZONE* Recommended award. Games in this category are excellent examples of their type, and if you're a fan of the genre they're well worth buying.

70-79% Any game that scores between 70+79% has just missed a recommended award but don't ignore them. The score is well above-average and that means you're getting a great title that's worth the investment if you're a fan of the genre.

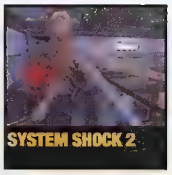
50-69% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-49% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre, or you see it at a reduced price.

0-19% Games that score under 20% should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating, and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged, then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.

PCZONE HALL OF FAME

These are the games that currently score 90% or above and so are deemed to be *PCZONE* classics



Some scientists in a game.
That'll never catch on.

"Bob! Get down, your tea's ready."

Even angels need to take a piss.

"Come back, I'm not really a welder."

One of this pair is possessed by
Bob. Can you guess who it is yet?

"Hold on, I think
I've shit meself."

I'm Bob, and I've come to save the world! Wearing a nappy!

MESSIAH

£39.99 • Virgin • Out January 2000

Only the true Messiah denies his divinity.
Unbeliever: *Steve Hill*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card
WE SAY The game adapts itself to suit your PC, so more is better

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

It is said that there are only seven different jokes in the world. It is also said that there are only seven different game genres. We don't know who said it, but surely someday one game will rashly try to encompass them all. Step forward, then, *Messiah*, the world's first third person, platform, puzzle, stealth-oriented shoot 'em up, action adventure. Oh yes… With an angel.

Messiah doesn't so much bust a genre as take elements of a cross section and stuff them into one all-singing, all-dancing extravaganza. Starring the aforementioned angel.

Yes, an angel – a fact that has already caused minor consternation among those with nothing better to do. Fuel was added to the fire by publishers Virgin, who released a typically controversial advert featuring a picture of the Pope clutching a home-rolled jazz cigarette, accompanied by the legend: "What on Earth possessed you?"

Developers Shiny wondered what on Earth possessed Virgin, and were unsurprised to learn that the campaign was banned by a number of magazines, this one included. Some misguided religious zealots will inevitably pick up on the game as an example of the sickness permeating our society, but they will be well wide of the mark. Releasing a game called *Messiah* as we celebrate the 2000th birthday of Jesus Christ Our Saviour might be asking for trouble, but this is simply down to the game being hideously late, as opposed to any premeditated evil. *Messiah* is, of course, an adult game, but this is due to the more orthodox reasons of sickening acts of violence and foul and abusive language. Business as usual, then.

"*Messiah*, the world's first third person, platform, puzzle, stealth-orientated shoot 'em up, action adventure"

CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM

Despite the name, and the angel – which sounds more cringeworthy every time we mention it – *Messiah* is by no means a game about religion. Playing as an angel (cringe) is simply a mechanism for enabling you to take possession of other characters in the game. They

could just have easily made it an alien life force, or even come up with some kind of soul transfer nonsense, a là *The Nomad Soul*, and then nobody would have raised an eyebrow.

But they didn't. They chose an angel. An angel called Bob, no less. This, in the perennial sixth form world of computer games is, of course, hilarious. An angel! Called Bób! Nurse, my sides!

That's Bob over there, in those pictures, and indeed on the cover of this very organ. Now we don't know what an angel looks like, for the simple reason that there's no such thing. Call us old-fashioned, but Bob looks like a slightly overweight child in a nappy, with wings (Bob, not the nappy). If pushed, we might concede that he's a cherub, while also pointing out that the design is not a million miles from the dancing baby popularised in typing pool TV favourite *Ally McBeal*.

But he isn't, he's an angel, and as the token story would have us believe: "Bob is a working-class angel ordered by God himself to go and clean up the putrid, disgusting, sleazy and infested world of the future. He has been given the power of possession so that he can sneak up on any person, animal or genetically engineered being and leap right into their soul!

"With your help, Bob can then use their bodies, their weapons, or even their bare hands to strangle, cripple, impale and incinerate the cities of sinners sent to stop you from finding Satan himself.

By hi-jacking their souls, Bob can use these sinners' bodies against their will as armour (to take pain for him), or he can use them for camouflage (to hide inside them) and pretend to be just another twisted citizen in the Messiah world…

"The rules are up to you… Enjoy the freedom."

"Bob can then use their bodies, their weapons, or even their bare hands to strangle, cripple, impale and incinerate"

VIDEO NASTY

That's that cleared up, then, and in case you can't read, the above tale is related via a (mercifully) brief FMV sequence that's supposed to be funny. It's an almost universal truth that every US games developer you meet will tell you that they "love your Monty Python," blissfully unaware of an entire generation of superior comedy (acknowledging only Benny Hill and Mr Bean). Shiny would appear to be no different, and the intro wears its Pythonesque influences on its pre-rendered sleeve. Set high in the clouds, the booming voice of God dispatches the reluctant Bob earthwards in a ball of mock-ecclesiastical flame. Bob lands smack between the shoulder blades of an oblivious cop, whose body he then possesses before embarking on a murderous spree of bloodletting, unleashing a carnival of violence which is entirely at odds with the cartoon intro and far from being angelic.

It's an incongruous concept, with an unorthodox lead character. Shiny don't specialise in orthodox characters, though: the underachieving *MDK* featured a rubber-suited man with a head like a penis, and the game which forged their reputation starred none other than an earthworm called Jim. If you want to get unnecessarily deep about it, *Messiah* could be considered a natural progression from *Earthworm Jim*, in that a weak central character becomes strong by immersing himself in a more powerful shell. In Jim's case, it's his super-hyper-duper-kinetic suit, and in young Bob's case, it's the bodies of the unfortunates that he possesses.

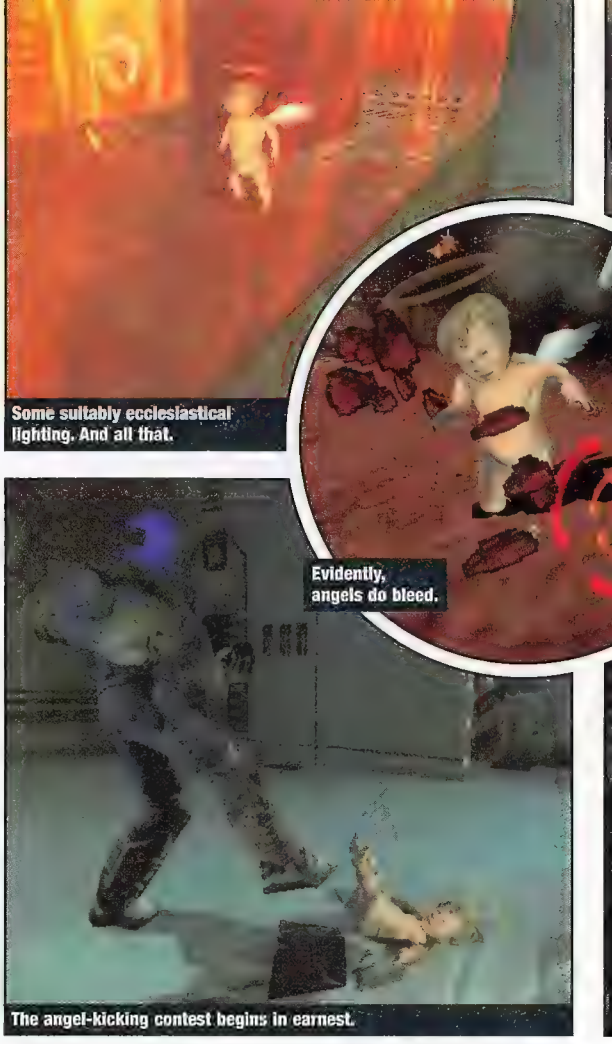
ANGEL DELIGHT

On his own, Bob's pretty useless – especially in a fight. He might be able to fly (but only with the grace and effectiveness of a fat fairy), but a couple of high velocity bullets aimed at the back of the head and he's one dead angel – despite television teaching us that angels are immortal. Perhaps they've just got lots of save games – something that is essential in *Messiah*, as death comes swiftly and often. However, as long as it's not Bob that's dead, it doesn't really matter. Other characters in the game are largely expendable, and *Messiah* forces you into something of a re-education in the way you play games.

Self-preservation comes instinctively, but once you have possessed a body, this doesn't have to be the case. In fact, it can be used to your advantage and opens up a whole new world of strategies. Consider, for instance, a situation where you are faced with two cops that you need to get rid of. You could wander around and find another character, jump into him and go at them with all guns blazing. You could also keep your distance and pick them off with the sniper mode, which offers three levels of zoom. Alternatively, you could sneak up on one of the rogue cops, jump up his arse without being detected, calmly stroll across to his buddy and shoot him in the temple from close range. You could then walk your possessed cop to a high place and simply force him to leap to his death, jumping out of his back at the crucial moment. Explaining what you are doing to a casual passer-by might prove more difficult, but it's nonetheless an interesting concept.

PULLING IT OFF

Interesting it might be, easy to pull off, it isn't. Due to Bob's limited stature, and the dubious fact that he has to enter his victims from the rear, the actual act of possession often proves to be an irksome task. If you can manage to sneak up on someone



Some suitably ecclesiastical lighting. And all that.

Evidently, angels do bleed.

The angel-kicking contest begins in earnest.

The cinematic 3D-O-Vision option. 3D glasses *not* included.

THE THIRD DIMENSION

The future's so Shiny, you've got to wear 3D glasses. Yours for a eye-boggling sixty quid

Look closely at the accompanying screenshot. Looks a bit blurred, doesn't it? Don't worry, you haven't got mud in your eye, it's just that the screenshot is in 3D. Not in the traditional sense of 3D gaming, but as in wearing-silly-glasses-3D. It's something that is attempted intermittently in films, and who can forget such classics as *House Of Wax*, *Spacehunters in the Forbidden Zone* and, of course, the execrable *Jaws 3D*. However, no matter how often the trend is resurrected, the result is the same: you get a headache and you look a tit.

Shiny are attempting to bring 3D-O-vision into gaming, though, and *Messiah* will offer this option. However, it's no good trying to play it with those free glasses you've had since the last TV special, as a decent pair will be needed, setting you back the best part of 60 notes. They're slightly more high-tech, though, adjusting the depth of vision and so forth to suit the particular user's eyes. We've had a dabble, and while the game certainly looked all right, it was rather disorientating. The experience was also marred by having to tear the glasses off our faces as we were thrown into a violent *Lawnmower Man*-style flashback. You have been warned.

WALKTHROUGH

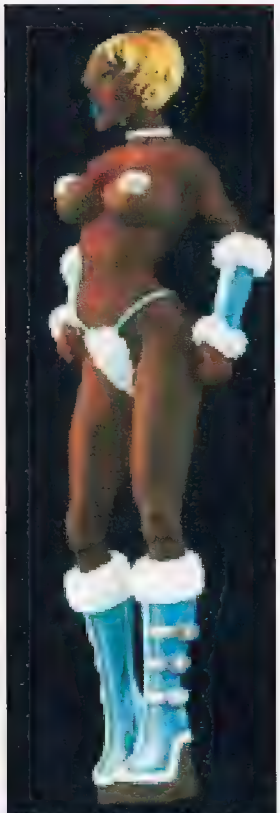
WHEN ANGELS ATTACK

The art of possession in one easy lesson

1 A welder with his back turned is a gift.

2 Go on Bob lad, get in there.

Platform game, anyone?



"My name's Laya, and I perform various sexual acts in exchange for currency."

undetected, it's fairly straightforward, but once your cover is blown it becomes a frantic affair. Once alerted, your intended victim will naturally turn to face you and there then follows some desperate moments as you rapidly circle your spinning victim, hoping to jump into an orifice to gain access. It's not a particularly subtle element of the gameplay, and often depends as much on luck as judgement, particularly in the midst of a skirmish, when you will find yourself leaping into anything that moves (a bit like Peter Stringfellow). While it's not particularly refined, it can still make for some exciting exchanges, and in the heat of battle seeing the cherub emerge from the corpse of a stricken victim is enough to induce blind panic, while subsequent possession induces a palpable sense of relief. All of which is utter gibberish to anyone who doesn't play games.

Shiny's parent company, Interplay, boasts the motto "By Gamers. For Gamers", and *Messiah* is certainly sticking to it. The entire length of the keyboard is utilised, as is the mouse, and it certainly isn't a case of pick up and play. Put it this way – you're not going to come home and find your mum having a dabble, neither will you find your four-year-old brother tearing through the levels. Which is just as well, as the game features strong language and adult themes.

PIMP WHORE PIMP WHORE

Adult themes? Well, it's got whores in it, if that counts, although if Shiny were looking to shock, they might have been better off *not* featuring prostitutes. *Messiah* isn't the first game to include hookers, and it won't be the last. We've all got access to hardcore pornography and a bit of computer-generated cleavage is scarcely going to raise a shrug. Besides, it does nothing to quash the image of computer games as the outlets of hormonally challenged loners.

As well as prostitutes and cops, *Messiah* features scientists, armoured behemoths, priests, bouncers, bondage dancers, pimps, gigolos, sewer people, vagrants, welders, nuclear technicians, riot police, bar tenders, medics and even rats, all of which can be possessed. The idea is that certain characters have particular skills that have to be used accordingly – although often it's simply a case of a door only opening for a certain rank of officer or, say, a nuclear area being safe only for radiation workers. The body you inhabit can also gain you access in other ways – providing you don't behave out of the ordinary, you can mingle with characters of your ilk. Conversely, stroll into a foreign area in the wrong body and you will be immediately challenged, particularly if you have your gun in combat mode. Different characters also react differently to being approached by a small cherub with wings. Some will be utterly bemused, some will shoot first and ask questions later, and others will ask questions first and not shoot at all – namely the scientists, who assume that you are the result of some macabre experiment.

FUTURE SHOCK

The world of *Messiah* is an overtly violent one in which street people known as Chots are constantly kicking off with the police. Riots are commonplace and you regularly get drawn in by either side, often changing the course of an altercation through your intervention. For instance,

WE ARE ALL PROSTITUTES

Maybe it's perversion, or a slightly deeper reason, but you can now enter prostitutes. Hmm...

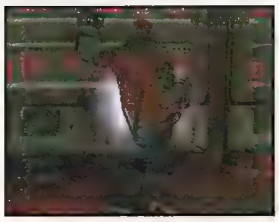
Picture the scene: the Shiny board room, a design meeting in progress, the high caffeine soft drinks flowing and ideas being frantically scribbled on to spiral notepads by men with experimental facial hair and questionable personal hygiene.

"I know," pipes up one bright spark, "Let's put some whores in it!" Beavis style laughter ensues, and everyone concurs. "Sluts are cool, man!"

"Whoa, hookers – that would be pretty cool!"

"Yeah man, we could like have them naked! Naked! Naked!" Two words: Grow. Up.

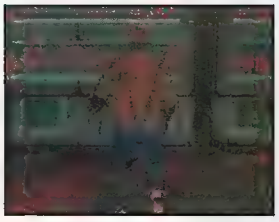
ENJ



3 "Oh my God!"

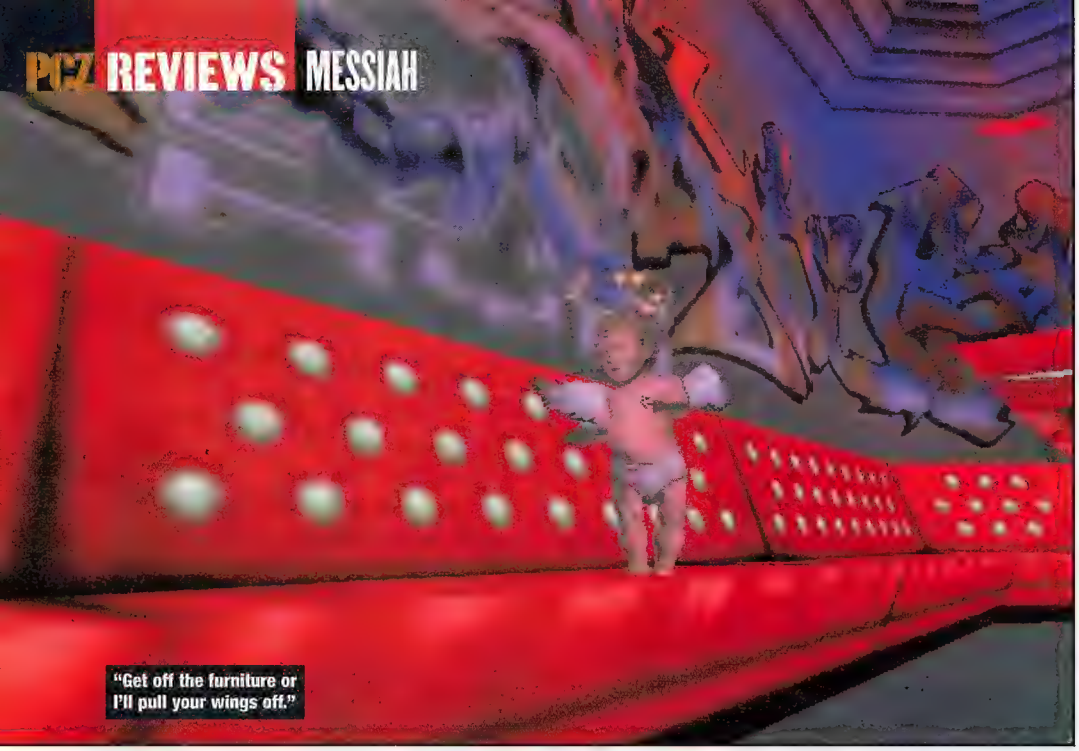
4 "Jesus Christ!"

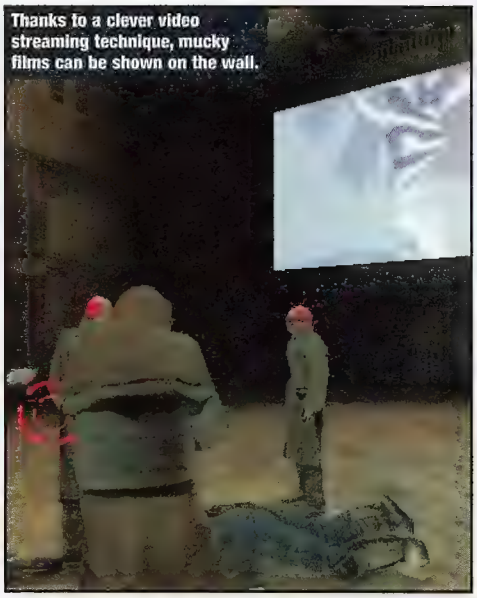
5 "Christ! No!"

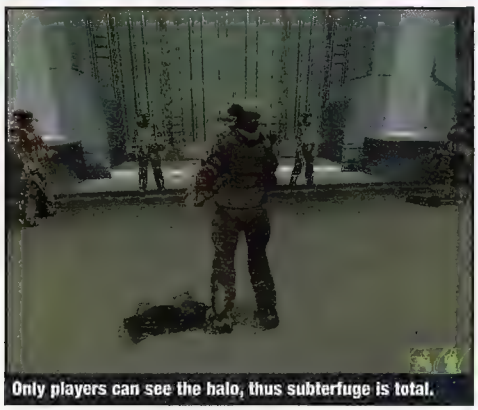


6 Possession secured, a halo duly appears.

7 The welder is now at your behest. Which is nice.


"Get off the furniture or I'll pull your wings off."


Thanks to a clever video streaming technique, mucky films can be shown on the wall.


Only players can see the halo, thus subterfuge is total.

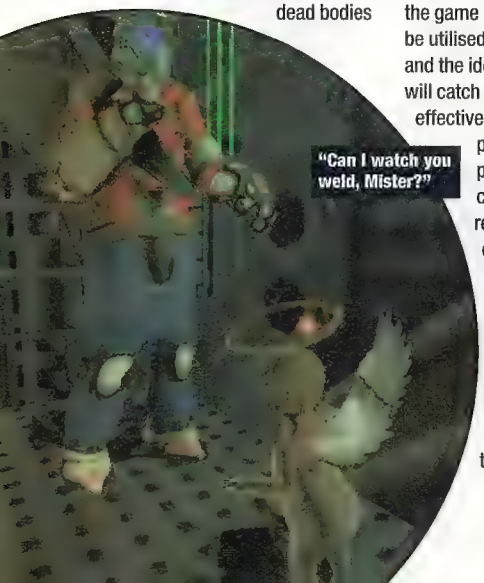
Remote controlled guns and everything.

"Bugger off, son, I'm trying to weld."

you can join in with the police, picking off the proletariat uprisers at will, or even unload into a colleague when no one is looking. And if your current character gets killed, you can simply (or not so simply) hop into another one. You might stroll into the middle of the skirmish and get ripped to shreds by the crossfire. It doesn't matter – that's the point.

The basis of *Messiah* is a simple case of good versus evil, and while it's fairly mercenary, people are going to have to die for the greater good. Die they do, and unlike most games, the dead bodies remain resolutely in place until you join them.

If you've had a look around, you'll surely agree that *Messiah* looks very nice, if not quite as mind boggling as was originally promised. It is set to look better in the future, though, as apparently the engine will adjust the detail of the characters and worlds to the maximum that your personal machine can handle. Shiny claim that you will actually get to see your PC being used at 100% of its capacity, with *Messiah* pushing every part to its full potential. Apparently, there is detail within the game engine that can't even be utilised on today's machines, and the idea is that technology will catch up with the game, effectively making it future-proof. There's no way to prove this, but if it is the case, expect a *Messiah* resurrection every couple of years. That would be in keeping with the game's name, after all.


"Can I watch you weld, Mister?"

LEVEL LEVEL

So what have they done with all this clever technology? Made a computer game, obviously. And it looks like one. Supposedly a near future version of Earth, the general look and feel of the locations appears to have been lifted straight from the *Game Designer's Book Of The Future*. Weapons and crates of explosives are left liberally scattered around, doors open with the obligatory hydraulic 'whoosh' and 'Access Denied' is repeated ad infinitum in a suitably robotic voice. And while we're all for real world locations, if we find ourselves in another warehouse, sewer or nightclub, we're going to have to punch someone in the throat.

All three make up a level of *Messiah*, along with some 13 others, all of which generally involve getting from one place to another without being killed. How you do this usually depends on who designed the level, and a variety of gaming styles are deployed, some of them covering a lot of old ground. Traditional door opening affairs are represented, as are platformers, and guiding a bloated cherub round some industrial areas proves particularly frustrating. A degree of thought has gone into some of the other levels and a clear strategy is usually required, although it often degenerates into a shooting match. Even so, it's still different from the norm, as you can only carry one weapon at a time. There are 10 or so weapons in the game, including flamethrowers, pump action shotguns, machine guns, bazookas, rocket-propelled harpoon guns, buzzsaws, ice guns and mines. Targeting is automatic, and it is largely a case of keeping your finger on the trigger, although more subtlety does come into play when sniping. And you can even have a go at someone with a welding torch – which must be a first.

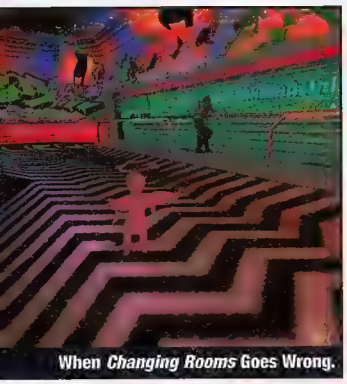
"There's constantly something going on, and much of the value is in seeing what's around the next corner"

VFM?

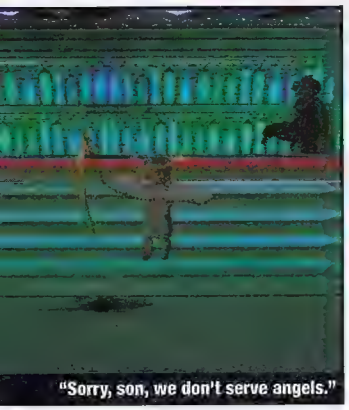
It's a mixed bag then, but this mixture of styles might irk some people. Then again, others might consider it value for money. It can lead to a dilution of focus though, and you can find yourself thinking in terms of a platform game, or a shooting game, or whatever section you are playing. There's an argument that this pick 'n' mix style of game presents less of a consistent experience. Whereas in *Half-Life*, you were fighting for your life, in *Messiah* the challenge often seems to be solving the game designer's puzzles.

Taken as a whole though, it does work, and if you can suspend your disbelief, *Messiah* is an intriguing game. There's constantly something going on, and much of the value is in seeing what's around the next corner. It's a fine piece of work, although whether it gives Shiny the hit they are so desperate for remains to be seen. Its mass market appeal is debatable, and it's certainly no *Earthworm Jim*, but in aiming high, Shiny have furnished us with a hardcore gaming experience that will test your manual dexterity and gaming acumen to their limits. *Messiah* is certainly an epic game, but after two and a half years, you'd really expect it to be. PCZ

"Have you got a light, mate?"



When *Changing Rooms* Goes Wrong.



"Sorry, son, we don't serve angels."

ALSO CONSIDER

THE NOMAD SOUL (Eidos, £34.99)
This bizarre French possess 'em up not only beat *Messiah* to the post, but also features David 'Dave' Bowie.
PCZ #83, 87%

TOMB RAIDER 1-4 (Eidos, £34.99)
A combination of puzzles, platforms and shooting, featuring a fully-grown woman instead of a winged child.
PCZ #83, 85%

REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL (Ubi Soft, £34.99) It's got an angel in it, and involves some shooting.
PCZ #71, 89%

PCZ VERDICT

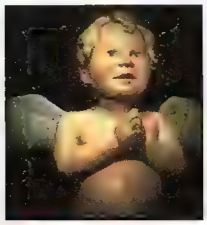
UPPERS Interesting concept • Variety of gaming styles • Clever graphical technology • Open-ended gameplay

DOWNERS Frustrating platform sections • Possession is tricky • Disorientating • Requires keyboard gymnastics • Clichéd environments

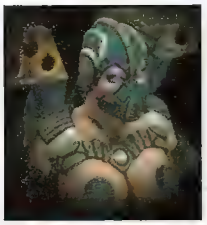
85 A star is born. And just in time for Christmas too.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Welcome to the wonderful and frightening world of Messiah



BOB
This is Bob. He's an angel, he's slightly overweight and he can fly a bit. You are him.



SUBGIRL
The protectors of pimps and whores throughout the city. They even have their own union.

RIOT COP
"White riot, I wanna riot, white riot, a riot of my own." Or something like that

BARMAN
"Two pints of lager and a packet of crisps please. And a smile. Oh and a pack of three"

MEDIC
"Hello Doctor, I seem to have been shot in the face by person or person's unknown."

EVIL BOB
Bob's evil alter ego, the reasons for which become apparent in the course of the game.

LIGHT COP
You want to join the police? You're going to need five '0' levels and a big hat.

BEHEMOTH
The behemoth is capable of tearing you a new arsehole. Unless you climb up his first.

WELDER
Nice to see traditional, skill-based trade and arts surviving well into the future.

DWELLER
The Village People/Billy Idol revival continues apace. A fan slighted yesterday. Somewhere.

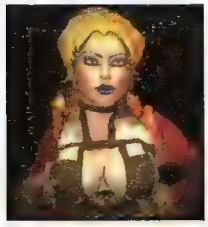
BOUNCER
In the words of *Kicks Like A Mule*: "Your name's not down, you're not coming in."

MEDIUM COP
Push a few people down some stairs and you might get promoted to medium.

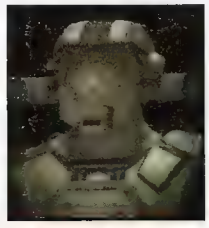
BEAST
The BBC special effects department lives on. Come back, *Doctor Who*, all is forgiven.

RADIATION WORKER
That fancy suit protects them from radiation and that.

FEMALE DWELLER
Gratuitous cleavage in male-oriented, PC game shock.



PROSTITUTE
Hookers, streetwalkers, whores, meat puppets... etc, *Messiah*'s full of them.



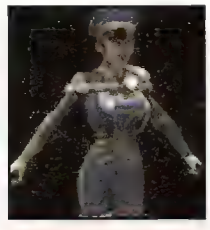
HEAVY COP
The Roy Bramall of the *Messiah* world, with a big hat and everything.

WAITRESS
"Can I get eggs easy over on sourdough with an orange juice and decaf?"

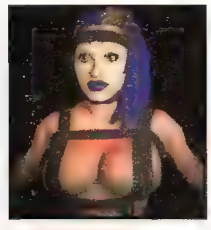
CHOT
Ne'er-do-wells, this lot are always in trouble with the law.

GUN COMMANDER
A commander of guns, no less.

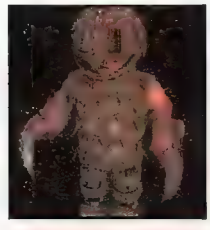
PIMP
If you have whores, you'll need pimps. Say hello to Daddy Cool.



FEMALE COP
Equal opportunities apply, and women aren't just for whoring.



DANCER
Dancing – it's just like girls kissing, it's not porn – it's erotica.



DWARF CHOT
Another missed opportunity for David Rappaport.

DJ
Three 12-inches and a record bag and everyone's Judge Jules.

HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE

£19.99 • Sierra • Out now

"We're on an express elevator to hell – going down."

Our Game Of The Millennium finally gets a tough little kid brother to play with. *David McCandless* gets slapped around and hands over his dinner money

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 with MMX Memory; 32Mb,1Mb PCI video **Memory** 32Mb, 1Mb PCI video **WE SAY** Get a very decent 32Mb graphic card, 64Mb RAM and a Pentium II 350 or faster to see it in its full glory

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

At last. What has easily been the most exciting and invigorating game *ever* finally up-chucks an official mission pack. Cleverly done, this 40-odd level add-on runs alongside the main story of *Half-Life*, but you play a soldier, the enemy of yourself in the first game, with access to ten new weapons and with five new aliens to shoot them at.

You play Corporal Adrian Shepard, part of a biohazard containment squad flown into the Black Mesa after Gordon Freeman tripped over a few wires and let a load of aliens from hell invade our dimension. Unfortunately, your helicopter crashes en route and after a few brief flickers of consciousness, you come round inside a laboratory, deep in the heart of the facility. Without knowing your orders, you are unsure about what to do, other than to simply get the hell out. But as you pick your way through the blasted remains of the vast base, you realise you're caught up in not just one, but several huge conspiracies…

SOUNDS FAMILIAR?

The game is basically *Half-Life* all over again. Tense, nerve-wracking stuff. You pad down corridors and into rooms. You back up against the walls. You know if anything wants to get you, it has to come straight at you and the humming automatic rifle in your hands will soon stop them. But still you feel scared. You know something's going to happen. This is *Half-Life*. Something always happens.

You're used to the tricks. Face-hugging crabs dropping out of ceiling tiles. One-eyed electrical cycloptic things teleporting in behind you. Pressing buttons to activate teleports or seal off doors. Operating rudimentary machinery one second and then being forced to leap huge puddles of radioactive waste the next. It's much the same with a few nice touches.

"You back up against the walls. You know if anything wants to get you, it has to come straight at you. Still you feel scared"

And as you progress, you begin to overlap the first story. So there's the garbage compactor where Gordon Freeman was dragged to be squished; there's the bridge bit where you first met the helicopter, the alien shark, and probably your death; the train he took at the beginning of the game; and then there's the massive teleport cavern where Freeman finally manages to propel himself to Zen. You even get to fly off a few shots at him before he disappears. All this under the beady eye of the besuited 'administrator' figure.

Note to self: "What if you did kill Freeman? Wouldn't you then pollute the timeline? If he couldn't teleport at that point, then that means the game couldn't have finished, doesn't it?

No, Mister Bond, I expect you to die.

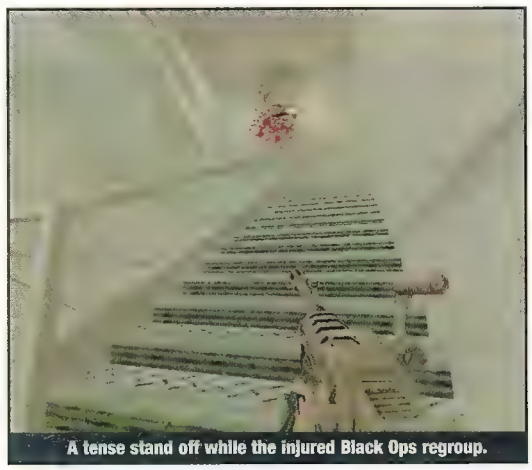
Wreck the scenery with the all new alien weaponry.

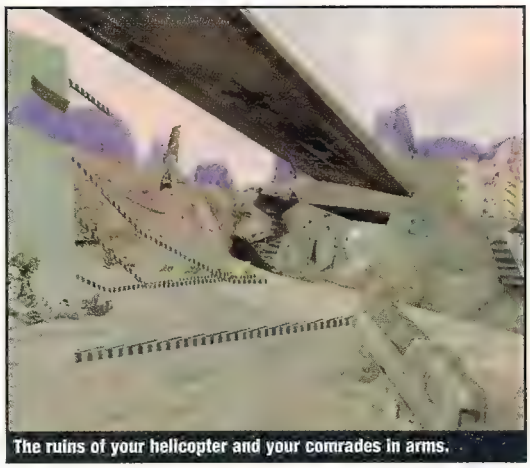
Oh f**k! Oh shit! Game over man. Game over.

Play around in the garbage compactor.

Not quite *Unreal Tournament*, but it's still a good sniper rifle.

Hand to hand combat with a pit drone. Not wise.


A tense stand off while the injured Black Ops regroup.


The ruins of your helicopter and your comrades in arms.

Hello. Fancy seeing you here. How's Patrice?

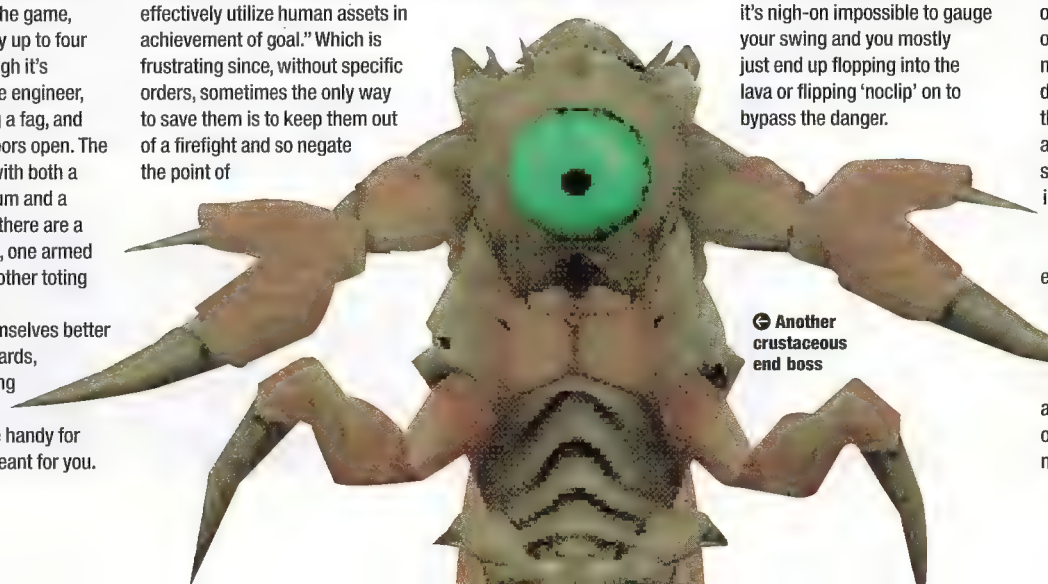
Therefore, there couldn't be a mission pack… therefore… you… don't… exist…"

INNOVATIONS

One of the big deals with *Opposing Forces* is your squad. At any point during the game, you may be joined by up to four soldier types (although it's usually just two). The engineer, perpetually chewing a fag, and able to blowtorch doors open. The medic, a dab hand with both a laser-sighted Magnum and a health kit. And then there are a couple of squaddies, one armed with a shotgun, the other toting an automatic rifle.

They handle themselves better than the security guards, taking cover, throwing grenades, pushing forward. And they're handy for absorbing bullets meant for you.

But you have to be careful they don't get too perforated. If you need one of your boys – a medic, say, to heal an engineer who needs to open a door – and he gets killed, the game ends with the missive: "Subject failed to effectively utilize human assets in achievement of goal." Which is frustrating since, without specific orders, sometimes the only way to save them is to keep them out of a firefight and so negate the point of them being there. Nevertheless, the added human component is welcome, as are the new incident characters, such as the fat security guard, Otis, and scientists in hazard suits. Less welcome is the new skill of rope climbing, an irritating and virtually skill-free addition to the *Half-Life* feature list. You press the 'use' key to attach yourself to a rope and then use forward and back, supposedly, to gain momentum. However, due to clipping errors, it's nigh-on impossible to gauge your swing and you mostly just end up flopping into the lava or flipping 'noclip' on to bypass the danger.


Another crustaceous end boss

STAND OFF

But by far the best bits are when you run up against human opponents. The new aliens are, frankly, dumb for a species that has apparently crossed a few alternate dimensions to invade our planet. You can pop several off at a distance without their neighbours noticing the sudden disappearance of a colleague and the appearance of medium rare alien steak all over the walls. The scary voltigores are huge and intimidating, but out of shape and easy to outrun.

Shock troopers, armed with electric roaches, are easy to spot and generally have a predictable run-off/run-back pattern which becomes easy to anticipate. The shock roach left over when they die is often far more difficult to kill.

WEAPONS

Love hurts... but not as much as these do

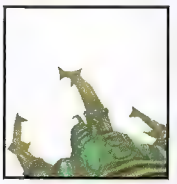
Wrench
Heavier than the crowbar and slower on the up-turn, but lands a devastating blow on both scenery and organic matter. Hilarious in deathmatch, with players clambering for position.

Combat Knife
Faster and just a bit more convenient when the wrench fails to satisfy. Also good for 'doing' scientists and cracking open those ammo boxes you find on shelves everywhere. Just don't try to wave it in the face of a big monster.

Magnum
The .45 slug impacts through the skin of its target with a satisfying watermelon sound. In alt-fire, a laser sight appears, allowing you to ask your victims if they are 'Sarah Connor' before offing them.

Heavy Machine Gun
A welcome addition to the *Half-Life* arsenal, this exceptional weapon will bury hundreds of highly accurate rounds deep within any opponent. Watch out, though – it'll devour an entire clip in seconds.

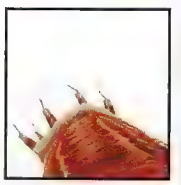
Shock Roach
Fires fast lightning bolts in a stream and then recharges to a maximum capacity of ten. Good for saving up proper men's ammo (ie bullets) but prone to run out at exactly the wrong moment.



Sniper Rifle
By no means as good as *Unreal Tournament*'s but impressive for picking off distant black ops operatives. Takes a whole five seconds to reload, though, so don't go running into a room with it.

Spore Launcher
Somewhat penile, but fires highly deadly green projectiles which will explode any human they touch. Right mouse button jettisons a slow, silent, but deadly green blob grenade.

Barnacle Gun
Nice touch. One of the roof-mounted tongue things rejigged as a grappling hook. It only grabs on to organic material, mind, but that does include dead bodies, alien eggs and such.



Displacer
Lethal and BFG-like in its delivery, the displacer takes some skill to master but wreaks complete havoc on your black ops opponents. In alt-fire mode during deathmatch, it makes you teleport randomly.

ALSO CONSIDER

UNREAL TOURNAMENT (GT Interactive, £34.99) If you want to improve your multiplayer prowess then this is the game to turn to. Superb AI and balanced weapons make for frantic gameplay, although the single-player option is too short. ***PCZ* #81, 90%**

HALF LIFE: TEAM FORTRESS (Free add-on for *Half-Life*) This free add-on has attracted feverish support on the Internet and precedes the full-blown *Team Fortress 2* release. Some say it's the best team-play game of all time. ***NOT REVIEWED***

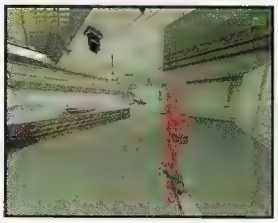
QUAKE 3 TEST DEMO (Free to download) The biggest game of 1999 has just gone gold and we're going to have a massive review and exclusive demo in the special Millennium issue of *PC ZONE*, on sale 13 January. Is it going to deliver the goods? ***NOT REVIEWED***

JEDI KNIGHT/MYSTERIES OF THE SITH (Activision, £19.99) Old, but still good, and if you like the story-driven action of *Half-Life* then you'll love this. Top level design and exciting missions. ***PCZ* #74, 90%**

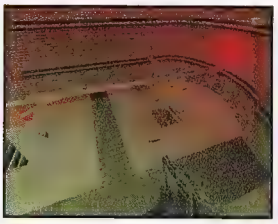
WALKTHROUGH

I AM THE BEST AT HALF-LIFE

"Didn't you know? I am the best *Half-Life* player in the world. *Opposing Force* has nothing that a seasoned survivor of Black Mesa like myself cannot handle. Bring it on"



1 Oh, the old laser ploy. Didn't we see this in the first one? Lots of deadly lasers intersecting other deadly lasers, blowing up computers and the like? Pah. Just limbo under the high ones. Vault the low ones. Easy.



7 A typical *Half-Life* puzzle – a rotating fan with an essential passage below – and one I am easily the master of. The fan may be rotating very fast but it's all a question of timing.

You're only really tested in hard, very hard, firefights with the black ops. Using a combination of heavy guns, black ninjas and black suited shock troopers, they make bases of most areas of the map, favouring warehouses and car-parks and sit there patiently, waiting for you.

Come storming in with your grizzled engineer and the soft-as-shite medic and you're going to get your fat carcass riddled with bullets in a second. Decide to leave the boys behind and do it alone and you'll get blown up by your own grenade – the one you threw like a panicked girl in a random direction five seconds earlier. Do it again. Get killed. And again. Dead. Again. Dead.

"Do it alone and you'll get blown up by your own grenade – the one you threw like a panicked girl five seconds earlier"

It's brilliant. Thanks to the AI and your blundering mistakes, each attempt on an area is different. But gradually, after about 20 minutes and 40 deaths, you start to learn. You discover the correct sequence of laser bomb, sniper rifle, rocket launcher, and blind panic which

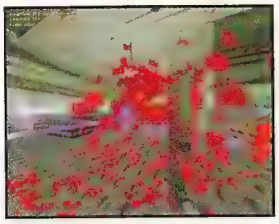
BOOT CAMP

Nice – an in-character hazard course. Whereas in *Half-Life*, polite scientists and a holo-babe asked you politely to please don your hazard suit, here it's drill sergeant Sharp bellowing down your ear: "Get over that beam. Now swing on that rope. You little maggot. My Aunty Floss could do better." You quickly get the gist when they test the efficacy of your bullet-proof vest by shooting you at point-blank range with a shotgun. "See?" chips in SM Sharp, "a dead marine is a useless marine." Then you have to survive 'environmental training' – basically, you and lots of fires, radioactive sludge and dangling live wires in the same place, at the same time. Then you do the assault course, Krypton Factor-style, leaping over sheer drops and shimmying down steep ladders. Finally, you reach the firing range and get to play with a few new pieces of hardware.

"Only two things come out of the UK – gays and strays."

"Drop and give me 50 of the best, you lousy maggot."

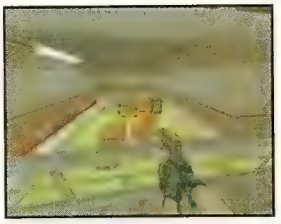
"Stop staring at my groin, you dirtbag."



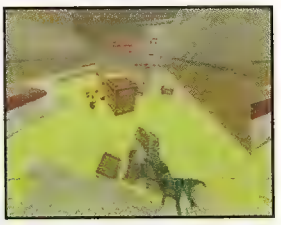
2 Ah. I seem to have got myself in a little spot of bother. Pinned down in a corner by a load of death rays. Should maybe have, er, smashed the mirrors, as suggested by a scientist I killed a few rooms back. Aaargh.

3 Oh what a quaint little room. Some radioactive waste, a sprinkling of rubble, and an old rickety ladder. Hmmm, a trap perhaps? You can't fool me. I am the best.

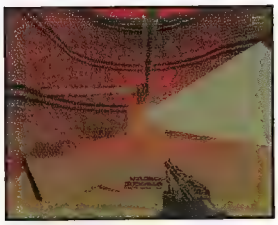
4 Ah, I seem to be pinned down on the last remaining strut of the ceiling. Thanks to an explosion, the entire room appears to have collapsed. The roof just crashed through the floor and waste is flooding the compartment. Aaargh.



5 Oh... the robot from the start sequence of *Half-Life*. I wondered if they'd work him in. He seems to be trapped by some explosive crates and stopping the draining procedure. No problem, I'll just blow up...



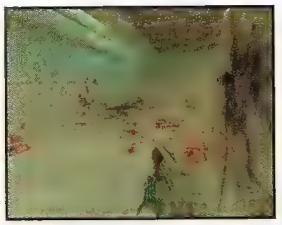
6 Ah, I seem to have blown myself up. The contained nature of the room appears to have amplified the explosions and had a rather dramatic 'splatter house' effect on my body. Aarggh.



8 Ah. I seem to be dead. Decapitated effortlessly by the sharpened steel of the 10,000rpm blade. Aarrgh.

9 This one's none too hard to work out. Rescue the scientist from his water trap and the boy will follow me around like a spaniel, opening locked doors and giving me some lip. Wonderful.

10 Shit. My scientist appears to have been killed by some freak electrical accident. Selfish bastard.



11 Ah, a complex full of black ops and invisible ninja snipers. No problem. Been in this situation before. Lay down a few trip mines, pop off a few grenades and Bob's your uncle.

12 Oh dear. I appear to have been slain almost instantaneously by my enemies, who now appear to be taking it in turns to take a waz on my shredded corpse.

will eventually get you and your boys through the area.

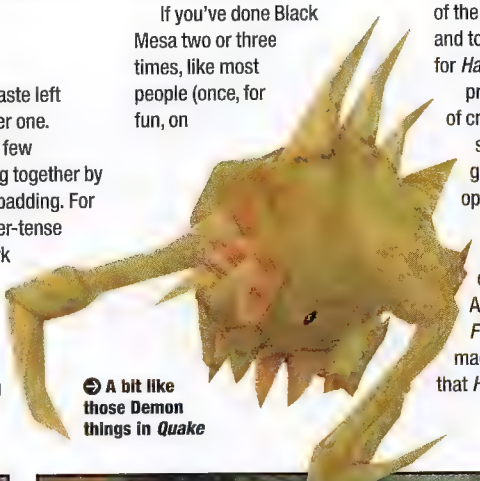
Later on, you'll even come across a pitched battle between aliens (who are trying to kill you) and black ops (who are also trying to kill you) – who, for the meantime, are just concentrating on killing each other. So you can just sit back and have a cup of tea in the corner, lobbing the odd grenade here and there to assist the outcome.

But interfering puts you in a strange moral dilemma. Do you kill the aliens – vicious, nasty, green-blooded little gits that they are? Or do you pop off a few of the black ops boys – super-high speed, accurate little shits that they are? Which is worse? For some reason, we always ended up siding with the aliens until, inevitably, once they'd killed off all the other humans, they turned on us.

IN TOTAL

Overall, though, the taste left in the mouth is a bitter one. *Opposing Forces* is a few excellent ideas strung together by pedestrian *Half-Life* padding. For every 1% health super-tense stand-off in a car park full of black ops, there are minutes spent scrabbling around samey tunnels, or activating the three machine parts necessary to steam broil a big nasty, or various keep-the-scientist-alive, destroy-the-helicopter scenarios we saw in the previous game.

If you've done Black Mesa two or three times, like most people (once, for fun, on Godmode with all the weapons killing everyone from the start and calling yourself the 'Angel Of Death'), and if you've played any of the hundreds of extra levels and total conversions available for *Half-Life* on the Net, you've probably had your fair share of crawling through ventilation shafts and leaping across gaps. The you-v-the-black ops bits are still compelling and a lot of the locations are clever, inventive takes on the *Half-Life* scenery. All in all, though, *Opposing Forces* is not quite the magnificently seamless whole that *Half-Life* was, but it's still a good weekend's worth of entertainment. PCZ



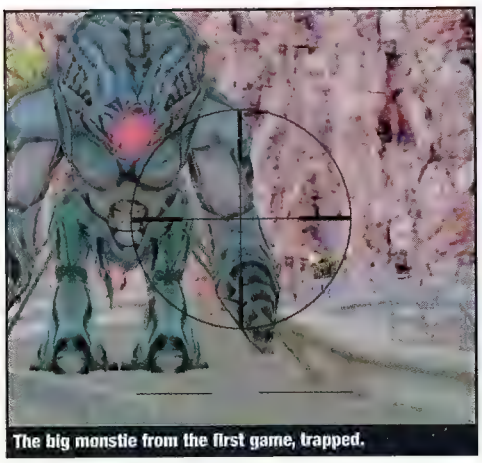
A bit like those Demon things in *Quake*

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Seamless integration with *Half-Life* storyline • Some good new weapons • New characters and good set pieces • Excellent AI in human opponents • Not too much Planet Xen

DOWNERS Very similar locales to first game • Dull moments of tunnel-crawling, rope-climbing and the like • Graphics beginning to look ropey • Squad AI and orders very limited • Doesn't push *Half-Life* to new extremes

85 Essential purchase for any *Half-Life* fan, but don't expect to be stunned



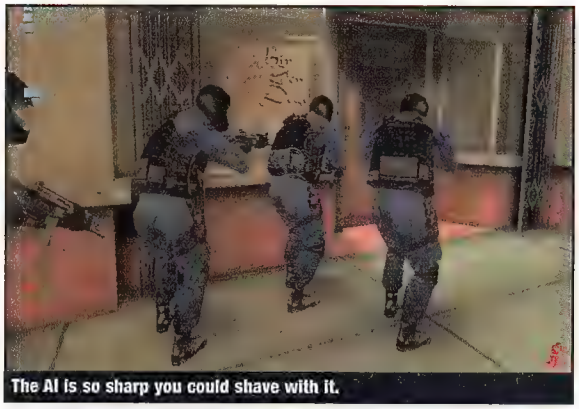
The big monstie from the first game, trapped.

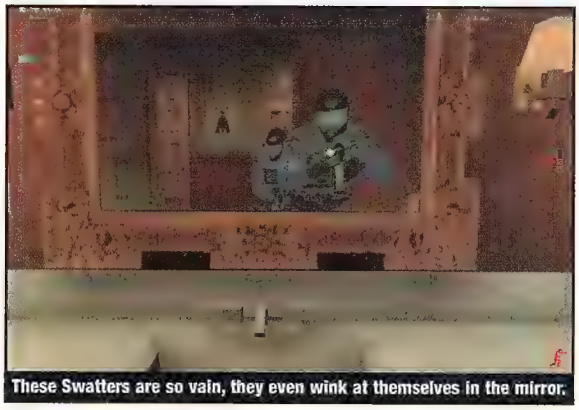
You're probably not going to slip past unnoticed.

A weird, scary hydra monster thing (™).

SWAT 3: CLOSE QUAR

£34.99 • Sierra • Out now


The AI is so sharp you could shave with it.


These Swatters are so vain, they even wink at themselves in the mirror.

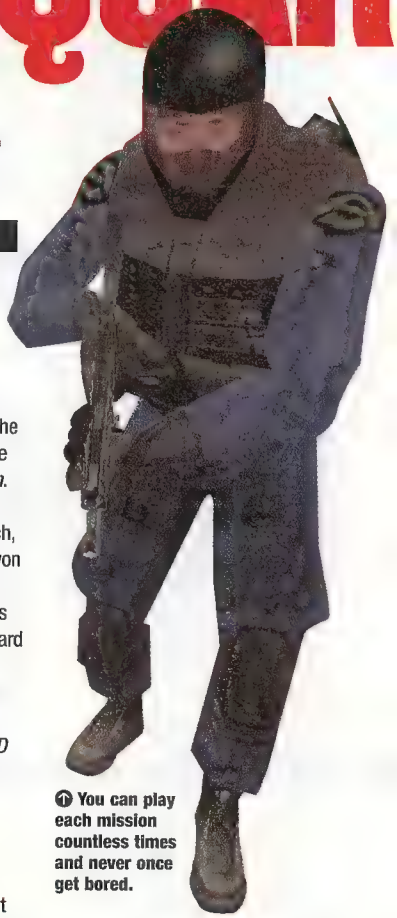
If you're ever in mortal peril, call the police. *Mark Hill* is too busy playing this game

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P266 with 64Mb RAM and a flashy 3D card recommended

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

It's not often that the computer games world is rocked by the addition of a new type of game, a new genre that sets a completely original precedent and introduces players to a whole different approach and style. We're seeing more and more games that try to cross over, with varying degrees of success, and defy all categorisation, but they don't usually set a trend of their own – a path for others to imitate and improve on. The last real innovation was probably the socially responsible shooter or tactical combat game, pioneered by *Spec Ops* and brought to mass attention by *Rainbow Six*. If *Spec Ops* was the *Wolfenstein 3D* of the genre, the Tom Clancy tie-in was its *Doom*. Then came along the gem that was *Hidden & Dangerous*, which, despite being bugged to hell, won a place in our hearts with the sheer beauty and intensity of its gameplay. Now setting a standard all of its own is *SWAT 3*, as authentic a recreation of urban combat as you could hope for, and sufficiently different to *H&D* to push aside such pointless questions of which is better.


You can play each mission countless times and never once get bored.

BRING ORDER TO CHAOS

SWAT 3's closest relative is, without doubt, *Rainbow Six*. But where *Rogue Spear* just added a few improvements and offered more of the same, this takes the concept to a whole, new level.

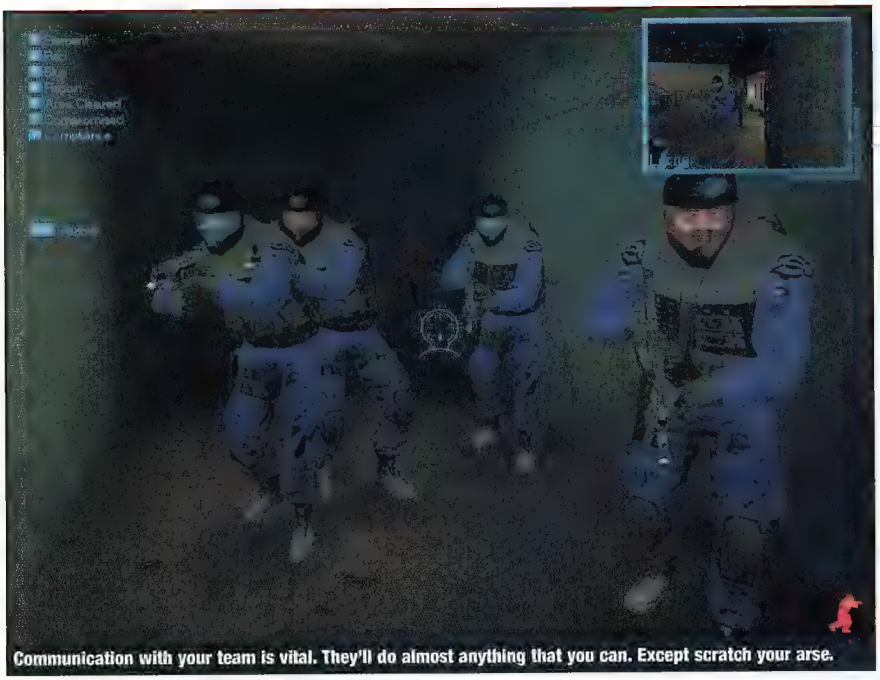
You take on the role of an element leader with the Special Weapons and Tactics division of the LAPD, complete with the chance to pick your race, name, nickname and the squad you'll be commanding for the rest of your career. There is also an option to play one of the 16 missions independently, but you lose the sense of progression you get from playing them in the right order.

The game's main focus is total realism and the creation of very believable situations. It might seem a bit strange, then, that it's set in the Los Angeles of 2005. But the date is just a clever way of manufacturing political situations and including unheard-of names of presidents and terrorist organisations without setting it in a stupid alternate universe.

As a member of this elite squad of peacekeepers, you are on constant stand-by for critical cases that require a highly trained team to deal with extraordinary circumstances, whether they involve street-snipers, kidnappers or terrorists.

She's just going to tie his shoe-laces. Honest.

TERS BATTLE


Communication with your team is vital. They'll do almost anything that you can. Except scratch your arse.

He might be an evil henchman, but who's going to feed his family?

The training range lets you brush up on all your moves.

Officers behave like real ones. Except they never rearrange their tackle.

Every mission has its own dramatic music when you "Go Dynamic".

You can forget about the number '3' that is tagged on to the end of the title. This game is generations ahead of its predecessors. Gone is the *Police Quest* name, the poor isometric graphics and the boring gameplay that only appealed to American hardcore police aficionados.

Characters in the game look like real, well-rounded people with distinguishing traits, eyes that blink and pupils that follow you around. Their posture, the way they move and react to their environment are all completely realistic. And so are the settings of banks, houses, offices and

"The characters look like real, well-rounded people. The way they move and react to their environment is completely realistic"

Instead, you've got some of the best 3D graphics we've seen in any game and the kind of compulsive gameplay *Rogue Spear* can only dream of.

The amount of graphical detail is really quite astounding. building sites, all of them recreated in such detail that you have no problem believing that you are actually there. The attention to detail doesn't stop there, however. Every member of your team (including yourself) has an elaborate history file, giving you an idea of their personality and how this will reflect on their performance. The mission briefings are a work of art in themselves, knitted as they are with such intricate minutiae

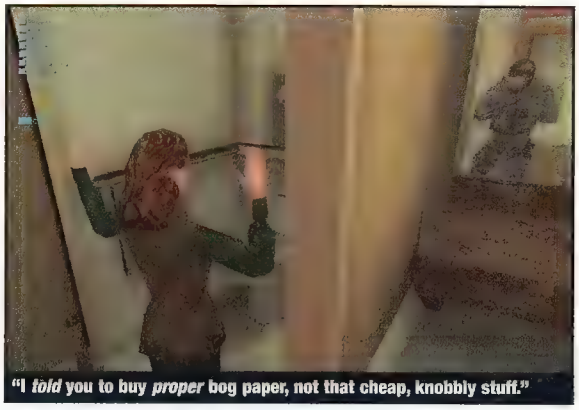
ALSO CONSIDER

Rogue Spear (Take 2, £34,99) The follow-up to *Rainbow Six*. It's still a great game but doesn't push any boundaries or offer anything new.
PCZ #84, 86%

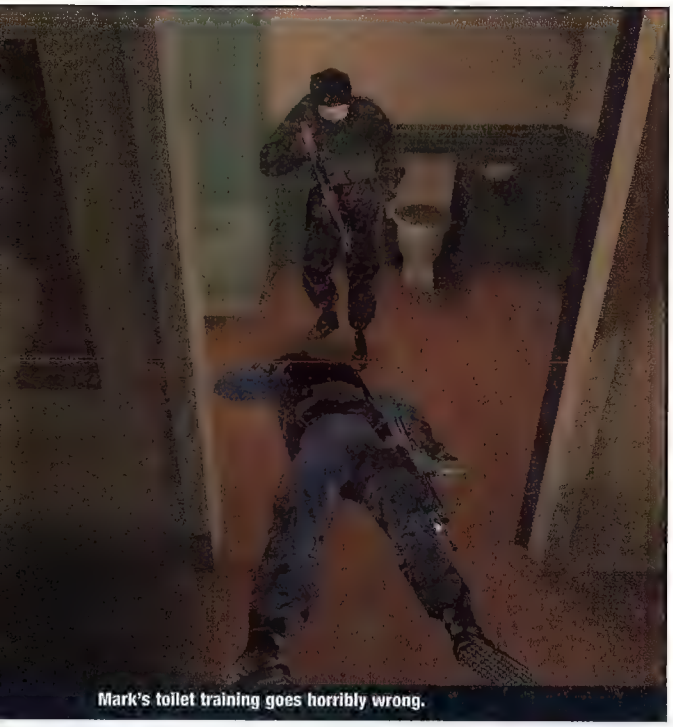
Hidden & Dangerous (Take 2, £39.99) The tactical combat game to beat. It's set in WWII and is different enough from *SWAT 3* to make both titles an essential buy.
PCZ #79, 91%

RESPECT MY AUTHORITY!

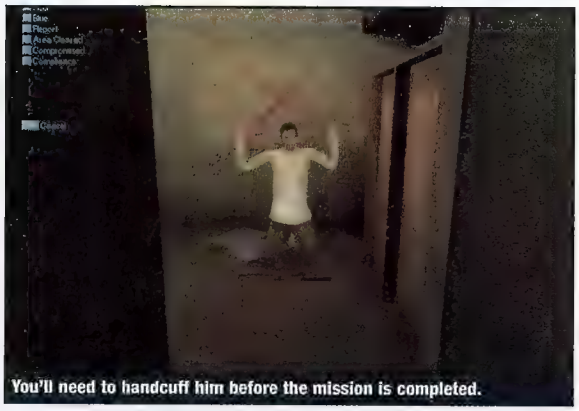
***SWAT 3* is nothing if not the epitome of the socially responsible shooter. The emphasis is on using deadly force only when strictly necessary and ensuring hostage survival at all costs. You even have a score percentage to judge this as you progress, as well as a respect percentage that tells you what your men think of you. There are certain rules and procedures you must go through in every mission. For example, you have to shout at hostages, get them on their knees and handcuff them before notifying HQ that they're ready for transport. This is done to ensure that they don't become hysterical, run into enemy fire and mess up a situation you've got under control, but not everybody is quite so understanding. You get insults and cries of disbelief that you would do such a thing and one high dignitary informs you that he golfs with your superior and "he's gonna hear about this." You can also evacuate downed team members if they're only injured, but until you've got the hang of it you're bound to give HQ the wrong message a few times. You'll soon be corrected by your own men and told by the mission supervisor that you're getting confused. Not good for your respect score.**



"I *told* you to buy *proper* bog paper, not that cheap, knobbly stuff."



Mark's toilet training goes horribly wrong.



You'll need to handcuff him before the mission is completed.

that the world you are about to enter and the people in it are completely believable before you've even set foot in it. You're given background information on the events, witness accounts, the expected state of the hostages (if there are any), the motivation of the suspects (political, personal, religious, etc) and the possible consequences should you fail. It gets to the point where you really understand exactly why you're doing what you're doing and how important it is that you do it well.

PERFECTLY TENSE

Although the perspective is strictly first-person, the emphasis is very much on stealth and tactics, rather than mindless *Quake*-ing. You go into each mission leading four other officers and, while you can't directly control any of them, you soon find that they are absolutely essential to your success. There is a great temptation, especially in the first simple missions, to go in gung-ho, without paying any attention to safety protocols or the fact that you've got very reliable men waiting to obey your every order. Then you open a door, and within a quarter of a second see the hooded figure of a terrorist followed by a flash of gunfire and a red line cutting the screen telling you you're dead.

To get anywhere in the game, you need to move around with extreme caution and learn how to use the extremely intuitive command system, through which you can tell your men to cover you, search in a certain direction, breach a door, throw a gas canister and all the other things swatters do for fun. Every corner, doorway and corridor is filled with danger. If you don't see the enemy before they see you, you're quite probably dead. As a result, the missions are so intense you'll need to lie down between gos to recover. We promise that your heart will skip a beat with alarming regularity, and you'll understand why sometimes people get shot when they could have been easily arrested. Things can get so tense that when all hell breaks loose you might be shooting hostages or your own men before you realise it.

Luckily, not only can you send people ahead to investigate, you also have a nifty device at your disposal to peek round corners undetected. It consists of a long tube with a tiny camera attached to the end which you can use as a hi-tech version of a mirror, the image appearing in the top right-hand corner of your screen. You can also view the action from the point of view of any of your men, thanks to the cameras attached to their helmets. And sometimes it really does help to have eyes in the back of your head.

"Some missions are over in a flash, others take ages. Every experience is fresh and keeps you wanting to go back for more"

"LET'S SLOW IT DOWN"

The make or break feature for these kind of games is the AI, and we can tell you it's nothing short of superb, and completely bug free for that matter (after all, occasional erratic behaviour can be attributed to people losing their cool). Your own men always do what you tell them to and you'll notice that, if you keep them informed of events out of their field of vision, they'll be much more effective. In return, they'll repay the compliment with constant updates on their position and situation.

As for the terrorists, they range from highly trained soldiers with a similar knowledge of tactics to your team, to completely unpredictable nutters, and they all behave in a highly realistic manner. Even the hostages have unique personalities and let you know exactly how they feel and what they think straight away.

Later missions are all about subtlety – one wrong move and you've blown the whole goddamn thing. But playing the same mission twice (or 15 times, as you sometimes need to) doesn't mean you know where critical elements are or where people are going to be. It changes every time. Sometimes missions are over in a flash, other times they take ages. Sometimes all the terrorists will be waiting for you in the deepest part of the level, others they'll be hanging around the start of it, patrolling with a deadly eye and a quick trigger. Every experience is a fresh one and keeps you wanting to go back for more. It's addictive in the furious way that only things you really care about can be.

There are some slight letdowns, such as the lack of sniping mode (although, admittedly, the game works beautifully without it and has been designed in a way that would make it superfluous) or the inability to play as the terrorists (an option available in *SWAT 2*). It's a shame your officers don't gather experience and improve their stats, thus becoming more essential while at the same time gaining in individuality (as in *X-COM*, where you really care about the life of each character). And the fact that there's no multiplayer option as yet – it will be introduced in a forthcoming add-on pack – will obviously piss off a great number of people.

"WE'RE GOOD TO GO"

But all this pales into insignificance once you're actually living through it. The whole thing has been put together with incredible professionalism, and just how professionally you act directly affects not only the success of your mission, but your life, the life of your team members and the life of every hostage involved in the mission. And the beauty of it all is that it actually does feel important once you've immersed yourself in it. Yet, in spite the mathematical precision of it all, the sense of fun is never pushed fully into the background.

Apparently, the *Rogue Spear* add-on pack will feature urban settings, but we can tell you now that it's not going to be anywhere near as good as this. And it's unlikely that anything in the foreseeable future will be. PCZ

THINKING ON YOUR FEET

Get used to it – you're going to be flying this one by the seat of your pants

Unlike *Rainbow Six*, there's no pre-mission planning stage where you can carefully plan your strategy on a detailed map. That would be silly. The whole point is that you're called urgently into an extreme situation that you have to deal with immediately. Sometimes, when the missions take place in public buildings, you can take a look at the floor plans, but the strategy is developed on the go as you assess the ever-changing situation. Since every time you play a mission things are different, you have to approach it from a different angle. Luckily, the command system is a joy to use, with a very simple interface you can issue orders through even in the heat of battle and the two modes available (stealth and dynamic) open up your options considerably. And guess what? Your men actually do what you tell them!

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Incredible graphics • Real-time tension • Totally believable situations • On-the-go tactics that work

DOWNERS No multiplayer, yet • No sniping • Can't play as terrorists

89 It's The Real Thing

Guillemot

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Contents, designs and specifications are subject to change without prior notice and may vary from one country to another.

You can't directly control fighters, only set them to defend or attack.

The red areas show the range of your planetary radar, the blue shows your ships sensors.

IMPERIUM

£34.99 • GT Interactive • Out January

If you've never heard of the first *Imperium Galactica* then don't worry, neither has *Richie Shoemaker*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 Memory 32MB RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** Direct3D compatible 3D accelerator and 600MB free hard disk space **WE SAY** Jerky performance on anything less than the recommended specs; PII 300 with 64MB RAM

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Let's be honest. Real-time strategy games have never been particularly hardcore have they? Your typical RTS is simply about erecting buildings and churning out units in greater quantities than your opponent while making sure you have enough resources to keep your war machine ticking along nicely. Hardcore turn-based strategy too, for all its supposed realism and anal attention to detail, is hardly the most accessible of computer game genres. Cramped 2D hexagonal maps, hundreds of illegible abbreviations and units that wouldn't look out of place on an air traffic control screen. And you could fall asleep just reading the back of the box.

"Whatever race you choose to head up, you're treated to some of the most impressive FMV yet seen in a virtual reality videogame"

So what does it take to combine the fast-paced no-brain action of real-time strategy with the thoughtful, more sedate nature of turn-based war? Surely, like mating an elephant with a hyena, it just can't be done? Or is it just that no-one has tried yet?

From such early 16-bit classics as *Supremacy* and *Imperium*, up until *Master Of Orion* and *Birth Of The Federation* on PC, all sci-fi empire-building games have been turn-based and 2D, and – to many PC gamers – fairly inaccessible compared to the likes of *C&C*.

Imperium Galactica II aims to change this state of affairs by letting you reign immortal and god-like over one of three alien races, indulge in research, diplomacy, trade, espionage, design and war, and watch events unfold in glorious 3D-o-vision.

HOLLYWOOD STARS

Although the overall aim in *IG2* is one of domination, there are various ways to achieve galactic supremacy, some more effective than others depending on which race you choose to control. The Solarians are essentially *IG2*'s human element, bog-standard in every way but their handsome looks. The Kra'hen are the aggressive warlike race, able to produce warships and tanks quickly and at low cost, but unable to recruit spies or engage in diplomacy. Finally there are the Shinari, devious and secretive, they specialise in trade and espionage at the cost of a relatively weak military.

Whatever race you choose to head up, you're treated to some of the most impressive FMV yet seen in a virtual reality videogame. The opening sequences are worth the entry ticket alone. To appreciate it we'd advise cooking up a bucket of salty popcorn and pouring yourself a vat of pop. This is Hollywood-style stuff on a tight budget. And the up side is that there is the right amount of it. Not too much to make it feel too linear and enough to keep you up all hours, waiting for the next sequence – between which there are countless sub-quests to take on, from rescuing turncoat scientists, to evacuating colonists on unstable planets.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

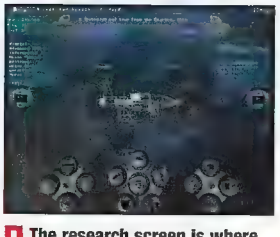
Having gorged your eyes on the cinematic introduction and worked through the excellent tutorial, you view centres on your homeworld and the single fleet around it. From the Starmap which greets you, navigation to each of the game's main screens is ridiculously simple. Within two clicks you can be zooming your camera across the surface of your planet, transferring tanks from factory to fleet, or redesigning ships and adding newly researched weapons to them.

With so much to do, some of

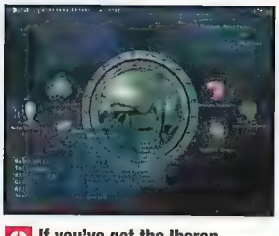
WALKTHROUGH

PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO SUBJUGATE

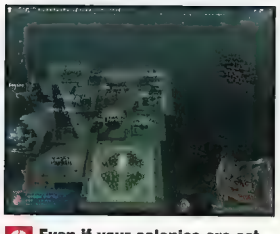
If you want to be master of the universe, you'll need more skills under your belt than just battle tactics



1 The research screen is where you spend credits on developing new ships, tanks and buildings, either to make your peace-loving people or war-mongering generals happy.

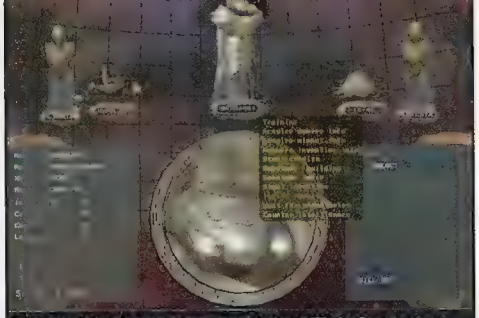


2 If you've got the Iberon Empire by the short and curlies, why not demand half a million credits off them, before you finish them off for good. They can only say no, after all.



3 Even if your colonies are set on autobuild, you can still add more buildings yourself or station your tanks in defensive positions, if you have any. Make sure you have enough workers and power.

4 The Starmap is where you'll spend most of the game. Here you can move fleets to attack, terraform planets, set tank and ship production levels and survey your sprawling empire.



Successful spies can increase their skills in four areas; infiltration, counter intelligence, combat and loyalty.

Fleets cargo capacity dictates how many tanks you can ferry around. Fleets can be split into new battle groups.

It doesn't matter where you place buildings but structures like rocket towers are important to repel ground attack.

Different buildings demand different levels of power and colonists to work them.

Before ground assaults, decide where to drop your tanks. This three-pronged attack failed.

Not the most useful view in the game, but easily the most attractive.

GALACTICA II

you may be wary that, as a real-time game, the danger is that the enemy could be sneaking in an attack while you're poncing around placing factories. Well, worry no longer. Thanks to a very handy pause feature, pressing 'space' freezes the action while still allowing you to visit every planet, fleet or screen in the game. If there's nothing to do but wait for your next round of tax money to fill the coffers, just hike the game speed up to '3' and research, movement and building will become three times faster.

With the amount there is to keep an eye on, it's surprising how easy it is to keep track of things. The only tricky aspect of the game is to monitor what all your colonies are up to, but as you can select autobuild on each one, you just have to name each planet 'Tank1, 'Trade5', 'Research3' etc and the problem is solved. If for some reason, the citizens on planet 'Ship12' are getting seditious, building a hospital or stadium should placate them.

A CALL TO ARMS

Now matter how happy your citizens are, the time soon comes when alien races are at your borders and a forceful expansion is your only survival. Posting spy satellites to gauge enemy strengths and sending secret agents to cause civil unrest will help to give you an advantage, but the only way to expand quickly is to build a fleet and invade. Move your mass of ships to engage the enemy's, and the view scoops round to show the ships facing off, the game paused for you to plan your attack.

Though not as visually attractive or as tactically fully featured as *Homeworld*, *IGZ*'s 3D battles are more the icing rather than the cake itself. Though you can choose formations for your ships, fire off special weapons or set your fighters to defend or attack, space battles are decided purely on firepower and strength of numbers. If you upgrade your ships with the latest weapons and send them in en masse – you're virtually unbeatable. With defenses neutralised, the planet's ripe for a surface attack.

Here tanks are landed outside the enemy city perimeter, the aim to destroy any defensive units. Again, planetary battles are nowhere near as gripping as those you'd find in say *WarZone 2100*, but then again, *IG2* has so much else to offer. The battles are usually over in a few minutes, then it's back to the cycle of crushing civil disobedience, building up production, research and finding more planets to add to your empire.

MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE

It's difficult to fault *Imperium Galactica II*. Using *Master Of Orion* and the original *Imperium Galactica* as blueprints, adding a full-3D interface must have taken some doing. Glitches are few and far between and it's hard to fault the alien intelligence. The only criticism you can levy at the game is that after a while, the 3D views kinda get in the way. Before long, you'll use the top-down view for most things, especially the Starmap and on planet surfaces where units easily get lost.

Being both beautifully presented and instantly engaging *IG2* is a game that expands boundaries that most developers are content to stay behind. Colony building in may lack the detail of *Sim City 3000* and combat the edge of *Homeworld*, but as a game that combines the two styles of games with relative ease, together with a visual story neither possess, *IG2* is something of a triumph. In short, IG2 is an excellent game, easy to learn with hours of enjoyment to be had. Which is as high an endorsement as you can get. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION (Hasbro, £34.99) The tried and tested *Master Of Orion* formula, but with four playable *Star Trek* races to take charge of. Addictive and all encompassing, but takes hours to get to grips with and the battles are plop. ***PCZ#78, 89%***

SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI (EA, £34.99) Following on from one of the greatest strategy games ever made, the masterful Sid Meier again delivers a sprawling epic. Certainly not as attractive or as accessible as *IG2*, *Alpha Centauri* is probably the most intelligent and challenging game of its type. ***PCZ#74, 92%***

HOMEWORLD (Sierra, £34.99) Without doubt the most beautiful 3D strategy game available, this is real-time strategy at its most action-packed. If you want to win other than by military means however, you won't find any option to here ***PCZ#82, 94%***

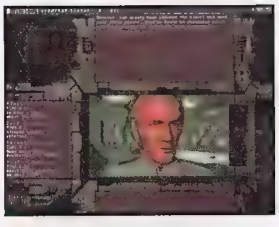
PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Easy to get to grips with thanks to a great interface and a detailed tutorial • Combines story, resource management and combat with ease • Hours of play and various strategies to try out

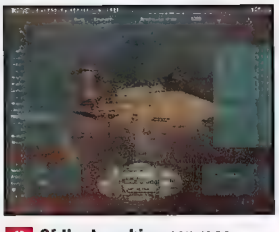
DOWNERS Perhaps not as hardcore or as action-packed as some would like • 3D views soon lose their novelty later on

83 Absorbing strategy that is accessible and intelligent

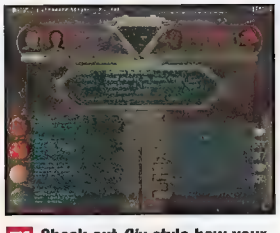
END



5 Important messages are flashed before your eyes. Miss them and you might miss out on an important business opportunity or news of an invading enemy fleet.

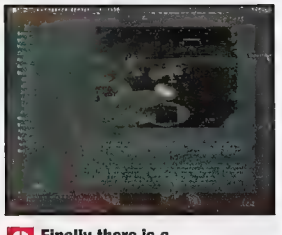


6 Of the ten ships per race, each can be customised with the latest weaponry or be made to carry more cargo – important when planning invasions, as you'll need plenty of tanks.



7 Check out *Civ*-style how your race is faring compared to the others and who is at war with who. Set your spending priorities and even go to the fleet or planetary screens .

8 Trading is simplistic, basically allowing you to sell excess ships and tanks, or buy hi-tech ships from more advanced civilisations. The Kra'hen – due to their war-like nature – don't trade.



9 Finally there is a comprehensive help screen that goes into even more detail than the 130 page manual. Best to pause the action and make a coffee before you wade in here.

REVENANT

AN EPIC ROLE-PLAYING ADVENTURE

Locke D'Averam has seen it all before. Literally. He is the Revenant, a warrior resurrected by a mysterious warlord to undertake a terrifying quest. As he begins his epic journey through the vast caves, forest and catacombs of the island of Ahkuilon he is plagued by memories of his past life, memories that begin to merge with his current existence leading to sinister consequences....

"Absolutely Awesome"
GAMES MASTER

- Over 50 non-player characters each with a unique personality and animated style.
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CINEMATIX

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PC CD

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

THEME PARK WORLD

£34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

Get your kicks preying on other people's thrills? *Mark Hill* prefers to have his own

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card
WE SAY A P300 with 64Mb RAM for a smoother ride

One of my strongest gaming memories is the weekend I spent playing the original *Theme Park* (*PCZ* #17, 93%), with hardly a pause for food, sleep or other base necessities. After all, I had my little people to worry about, their happiness to consider, their amusement, feeding and toilet relief to look after. I also needed to make money, build my emporium, take over the world and brainwash its entire population with over-sugared ice cream. Of course, when those 48 hours were over I couldn't give a toss about any of it.

So, when *Theme Park World* fell into my sweaty little hands, you can understand why I surrounded my PC with blankets, bags of crisps and a Victorian ceramic potty in preparation for the same experience, only with marvellous 3D graphics and hidden depths of playability that would extend its life beyond that of a mayfly. And I was right. Except for the hidden depths and the 'marvellous' adjective.

THE BIG DIPPER

To begin with, the graphics lack the sharpness you'd expect. Instead you get that grainy look that graced *Dungeon Keeper II*, but much worse. The maximum resolution is 800x600, so you can only ever see a small portion of your park and even on a hi-end machine the scrolling is slow and jerky. It's not a coincidence that it's also a PlayStation game – its childish console feel is more than apparent.

As for the depth, there's precious little to extend the original's gameplay. Don't get us wrong, you still spend whole nights building up a park, researching new rides, employing entertainers, adjusting the quality and price of your food outlets and generally being glued to the screen. But even this short-lived addiction is marred by some frustrating quirks: you can't buy more than one item at a time (so if you want to place five litter bins you have to keep going back to the buying screen and scroll down a list), the pop-up advisor is incredibly annoying (but at least you can turn him off), loading a saved game is a pain and you're reduced to a maintenance person rather than an omnipotent god within an hour. This last thing happened in *Theme Hospital* as well (and every other god game, for that matter), but only after you'd spent a couple of weeks playing it and discovering a million things.

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

The title is wide of the mark, too. The original had a world map you could work your way round when you had enough money. Here you start off with two themes (Halloween and Lost Kingdom) and have to unlock the other two (Fantasy and Space) by winning golden tickets. The fact that you never know what target to achieve before getting one means you just keep on playing until you do. Later in the game it seems it's never going to end, despite everything going well and nothing new happening.

The biggest-selling point is that you can experience the rides you build for yourself, but this is another disappointment. Despite being afraid of heights – the kind of person who freezes at the mere sight of a kids' ferris wheel – I barely stifled a yawn as I went first-person into a rollercoaster. It doesn't help that even the rides with the highest 'excitement' levels are tamer than a sedated penguin and about as graceful.

Theme Park World is extremely compulsive, but only in the way that crap TV is. You won't stop playing it for a few days, then you'll feel empty, disillusioned and possibly suicidal. Just like a real theme park. PCZ

"Even the rides with the highest 'excitement' levels are tamer than a sedated penguin and about as graceful"

ALSO CONSIDER

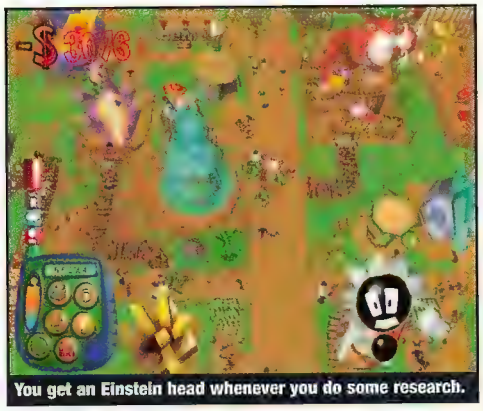
THEME HOSPITAL (EA Classics, £14.99) More fun and more lasting than *Theme Park*, this is a god sim that gets it all right and has you hooked until the end. ***PCZ* #71, 90%**

CAESAR 3 (Sierra, £29.99) The god of god sims, the intricacy and detail of this one keeps you going forever. Try *Pharaoh* if you prefer the Egyptians to the Romans. ***PCZ* #70, 92%**

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Very addictive • Full 3D • Different themes keep it interesting
DOWNERS Attraction wears off very quickly • Pointless first-person riding • Frustrating

70 Candy floss. With the same consistency


You get an Einstein head whenever you do some research.

The Hallowe'en theme's as scary as a *Scooby Doo* cartoon.

Your rides will be breaking down within minutes.

Theme Park World: a rollercoaster that goes downhill.

Experience just how much fun the mortals are not having.

"The thrill is gone, baby."

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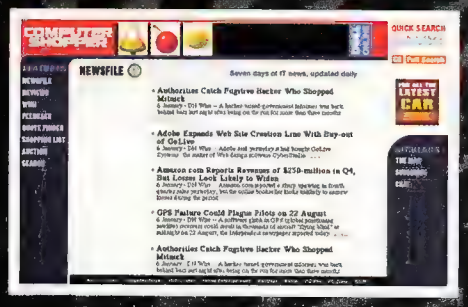

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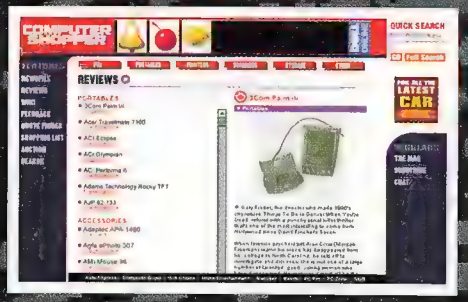

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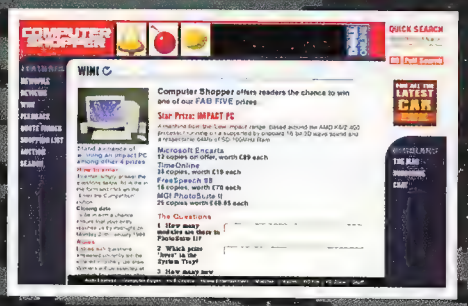

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CHAT
Your technical questions answered

TEAM ALLIGATOR

£34.99 • GT Interactive • Out now

It may sound like an action-wildlife programme on Channel 5, but the animals here are the boys of the Russian Air Force and *Paul Presley*, (the beast) of course

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** 4Mb Direct3D-compatible graphics card **WE SAY** That'll work, but you'd be advised to up the RAM somewhat

A task force pops down the shops for some fags, booze and pornography.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

And suddenly the Russians are popular once again. *First Flanker 2.0*, then that first-person military shooter whose name I can't remember, and now *Team Alligator*. How long this state of affairs will last following the Grozny 'invasion' is anyone's guess but at least it's making a change from all those bloody F-22 and Apache sims.

CRY HAVOC AND LET SLIP...

My personal favourite helicopter sim is *Apache/Havoc*. The one thing it did really well was to create that low-level 'treetop' experience. Does *Team Alligator* do it any better? Well, it certainly looks impressive. The vehicle and building models are very detailed (any owners of Voodoo 3 cards are in for a plethora of visual treats) and the terrain is very mountainous and gorgeous. But, while there are clumps of trees here and there, I have to admit that you don't quite get that forest-y feeling that *Apache/Havoc* offered. And from what I've seen of it, *Gunship!* is going to put them both to shame. Visually, *Apache/Havoc* has a slightly better world, *TA* has much better models. It's all very close though and it's not as if either of them look *bad*.

WAR, HUH, GOOD GOD Y'ALL

Visuals be damned though. *TA* is bloody good fun to fly. The Alligator's co-axial rotor blades make the thing exceptionally manoeuvrable and Simis have done an excellent job of representing that in the sim. It's something of a shame that the only units you go up against in the game are Russian-built as I'd loved to have gone head-to-head with an Apache in this thing.

The excellent flight model is matched by an equally good battlefield model. While we're not talking *Total Air War* or *Falcon 4* complexity here (or even the old drug-busting classic *ATAC* come to that – the last decent dynamic campaign engine seen in a helicopter sim), when you're out there in the middle of a battle, it feels like a real war. Guns are firing everywhere, tracer bullets light up the sky from all angles, the ground units actually fire on each other as well as you, enemy tanks move about looking for better positions as you'd expect. It's all very well done.

"The excellent flight model is matched by an equally good battlefield model... in the middle of a battle, it feels like a real war"

It's annoying that the game's front-end isn't up to the same standards. The mission editing options are very basic to say the least – about all you can do is move the waypoints around. There's no sense of the war unfolding in the campaign screens (a real-time map to show how your units are progressing, for instance). You just sit there staring at a pretty backdrop, waiting for a mission to pop up. The team management options are a nice touch and there's plenty of scope for issuing orders when you're actually 'in country', but overall this whole section could have been so much better.

Brookside Close was never the same after Sinbad tooled up.

"A real fixer-upper situated in a quiet neighbourhood."

THREE'S A CROWD

Other than that, *Team Alligator* is great. The training sessions are well designed, the three campaign areas, although a little small, give plenty of variety and, as I already said, it's a great machine to fly. While *Gunship!* has the potential to blow both it and *Apache/Havoc* out of the water, until we actually get to see MicroProse's beast you'll just have to choose which of these two appeals to you more. Both are excellent. PCZ

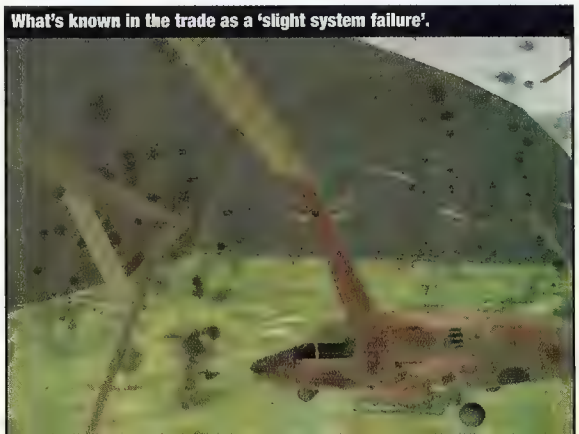
Your co-pilot/navigator. A happy chappie.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS It's great to fly • Looks damn fine • Feels like a real warzone

DOWNERS Clumsy front-end • Basic mission planner • No forests

84 A helicopter sim with real teeth



What's known in the trade as a 'slight system failure'.

ALSO CONSIDER

Apache/Havoc (Empire Interactive, £9.99) Perhaps the best currently out there (although it's close) and certainly the cheapest now it's on budget. How it will fare to *Gunship!* we'll just have to wait and see.

PCZ #84, 88%

CLOSE COMBAT IV

£39.99 • Mindscape/SSI • Out now

No hexes? No turns? Andrew Wright is marched off to war in ultra-realistic real time...

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** 200MHz Pentium or better **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** D3D-compatible graphics card **WE SAY** 266MHz Pentium or better with 64Mb RAM

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

When you get round to reviewing the fourth game in a series, the chances are that most people know what it's all about.

For those who don't, the *Close Combat* series are real-time, top-down wargames with gritty sound effects, highly realistic graphics and terrain, and authentic World War II era units – and not a single hex in sight.

For those who do know, *Close Combat IV* offers a full barrage of game improvements, including a new strategic level of play with dynamic supply and weather effects, wonderfully animated terrain, artillery and air strikes, and more realistic leadership effects.

First off, there's the new 'strategic layer' to the game which divides the Ardennes ('The Bulge') into 43 locations linked by roads and separated by rivers or other obstacles, such as forests. Each player moves representative 'battlegroups' around the map, by road link only, in an attempt to out-manoeuvre the other, either by cutting off supply lines or eliminating them in battle. Artillery, air strikes and air supply drops are available on a limited basis and can be allocated to any battlegroup the player chooses.

RUNNING THE RISK

Unfortunately, in *CCIV* these 'battlegroups' are limited to a maximum of 15 vehicles, heavy weapons, or infantry units and only one battlegroup is allowed in each game location. The battlegroups are carefully-chosen representatives of the forces involved in the historical campaign, but you just can't have a strategic wargame worth its salt that doesn't allow you to concentrate your forces for the crucial blow. Sometimes one side or the other will be short of the full range of units, but that's due to attrition, rather than tactical or strategic skill on anyone's part. Too often the 'strategic layer' ends up as a string of 15v15 unit scenarios pretending to make up a campaign, and being about as realistic as *Risk*.

Okay, so the strategic element isn't really the heart of the game but it's hardly the big step forward its new developers trumpet it to be. There's even a tentative step backwards when it comes to scenario design. Unlike the game's predecessor, *CCIII*, you're no longer allowed to decide for yourself whether you want tanks, self-propelled guns, half-tracks or whatever in your battlegroup. You can only choose from a limited range of ready-made armoured, mechanised or infantry-heavy setups.

There's simply no way to alter their make up and that becomes a major frustration when you want a little variation. Imagine you have two battlegroups side by side, one with lots of tanks, the other with too much infantry. You want to even them out to make a better fighting force. Or concentrate them in order to drive a wedge through the enemy. Sorry, you can't do either – *CCIV* only allows one battlegroup of 15 units on one map...

SOLDIER, SOLDIER

Taken as a whole, *CCIV* is out on its own as far as real-time wargames are concerned. Turn-based equivalents, from the vintage *Steel Panthers* series to Talonsoft's latest all-encompassing masterpiece, *Eastern Front II*, are ten-a-penny but you have to go a long way to get real-time wargaming with this level of graphical and technical realism. Happily, you can speed up or slow down the game, change video resolutions and select what you want soldier outlines to represent. It can be handy to set the outline colours to reflect their level of cover or morale – green is good, down through yellow and red to black.

CCIV's real claim to fame is the way it reflects the behaviour of individual soldiers. They're frightened, they're confident, they're superheroes or they run for home. If they're under pressure, they duck down out of sight. If their mates are blasted to oblivion, they eat dirt instead of K-rations and refuse to move.

Despite the fact that you can only give a whole unit specific orders, the game looks at each individual's line of sight and reaction separately, so you have between 30 and 40 men behaving much as they would in real life. It's frustrating, but it's utterly realistic.

REAL-TIME BRAINS

There's also the 'improved AI'. If only I had a quid for every game with an 'improved AI'... But, switching out of cynical mode for an instant, *CCIV*'s AI seems to be a big improvement over earlier versions. Its computer-led soldiers use flank attacks frequently and groups of units will often work together when attacking or defending.

Even your own men will fire at logical targets when left without orders, but there are still pathing problems. Tanks, in particular, seem to struggle with the simplest terrain – I watched a Panther struggling to turn round and move along a perfectly straight road by reversing one way, then the other, its turret circling furiously.

The interface is compact, with each unit's options effectively reduced to seven simple commands. Nine times out of ten this is all that's required, but occasionally it's not enough. There's a desperate need for a quick ceasefire button.

If you're low on ammo – and you often are in Bulge scenarios – and have a dozen widely-placed units firing on one enemy, it's almost impossible to get them to stop firing once the enemy is neutralised. All you can do is quickly select each one and order it into ambush so that it only fires at targets less than 30 metres away. In a furious firefight, by the time you've clicked on all of the firing units and then (finally) hit the 'M' (for ambush) key to stop them from firing, you've wasted a lot of ammo...

LEAD ON MACDUFF

Never mind, there are sufficient new features to make this a game worth buying. Artillery and air support missions are deadly and the reserve pools and reinforcements make even the shortest operations and campaigns great fun to play.

All leaders now have battlefield influence and, by keeping leaders close to the action, you can drive your men pretty hard. In defensive scenarios, infantry and support weapons will start in pits and trenches after deployment and the maps can be entered from several different directions, making it much less boring to fight over the same maps.

The *Ludo*-like strategic layer is embarrassingly simplistic, but it does add to the game's overall replayability. If only you could choose which specific units to include in your battlegroups... Maybe in *CCV*? PCZ

"*CCIV*'s claim to fame is that it reflects the behaviour of individual soldiers. They're frightened, they're confident, they're superheroes or they run for home"

B-26 bombers are the WW2 equivalent of Puff the Magic Dragon.

ALSO CONSIDER

COMMAND AND CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN (Electronic Arts, £34.99) The *Close Combat* series is pretty unique. In terms of its real-time gameplay, it's probably closer to *C&C: Tiberian Sun* than anything else. This recent version is awash with futuristic/fantasy weapons and units. **(*PCZ* #81, 90%)**

CLOSE COMBAT III: THE RUSSIAN FRONT (Microsoft, £39.99) *CC IV*'s predecessor is set on the Eastern Front. There's no so-called 'strategic layer' but at least you can design your own scenarios using whatever tanks and weapons you like. Should hit budget level very soon. **(*PCZ* #74, 84%)**

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Beautifully rendered graphics • Superb level of realism • Easy to play – hard to master

DOWNERS Can't choose which individual units you want in a battlegroup • No in-game ceasefire option • Only 15 units per side • *Ludo*-like strategy layer

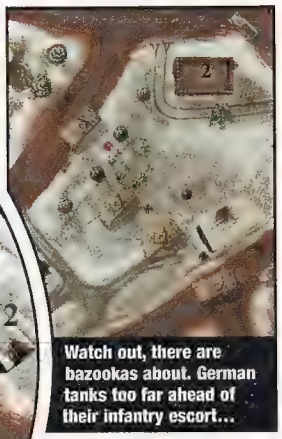
81 One step forward, two steps back

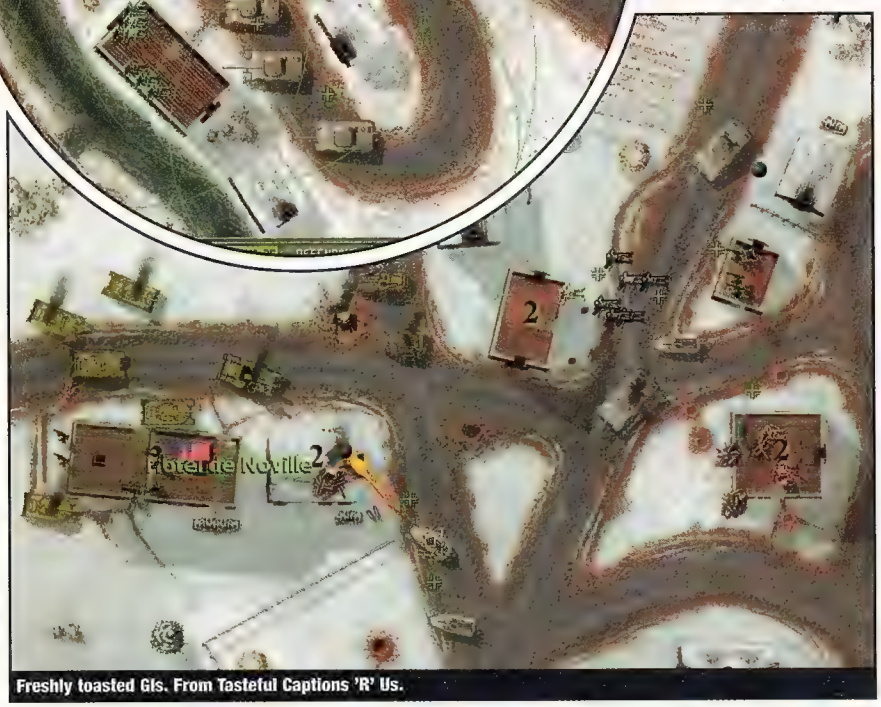
You may not want to bother with resolutions above 1024x768. If you want to see the game, that is.

More smoke than a packet of Woodbines. Whatever they are.

In the semi-finals of World War II, the US beat Germany 1-0.

Leadership circles show who's in command and who's not. Because it's important.


Watch out, there are bazookas about. German tanks too far ahead of their infantry escort...



Freshly toasted GIs. From Tasteful Captions 'R' Us.

WALKTHROUGH

BEAT THE BULGE

There's no right way to win a battle, but the victory locations earn you points and we all know what points make...

1 When you start a battle, it's best to zoom out and look at the overall situation. Set up your units anywhere in the highlighted area, bearing in mind that your opponent sets up in the darkened part of the map. Place your tanks and infantry carefully, covering each other and paying close attention to the flagged scenario objectives.

2 Once you've got a battle plan together, zoom in and place individual units. Note that you can give them movement or tactical orders before the game starts. In this case, a flamethrower team is being sent out of the back of the building and through the woods to attack Rolle castle. Note the use of waypoints to keep them under cover as much as possible. Each button-like dot represents a waypoint or destination for the other units.

3 The advancing Panzers, half-track and escorting infantry come across the enemy. The green line shows a clear line of sight to the enemy infantry, while the green targeting reticule indicates the tank has a straight 60 to 100 per cent chance of hitting the target. Other combinations of colours show a blocked line of sight, an obscured line of sight, a reduced hit chance due to the firing unit's inexperience or low morale, or the weapon being out of effective range.

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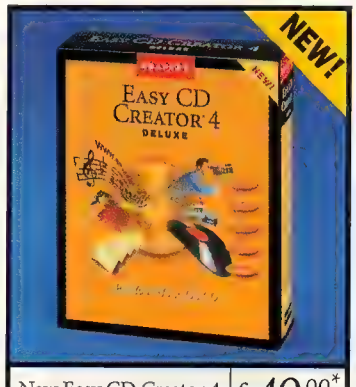

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SIZZE COMMUNICATION

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

£34.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Steve Hill gets a face full of snow. No change there, then...

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 333 Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** A PIII 400 with a decent card, 128Mb RAM and a goatee beard

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

The lexicon of Extreme Sports is riddled with gibberish, and none more so than snowboarding. A sport in which grown men openly discuss grabbing a stiffy or performing a gay twist is clearly leaving itself open to ridicule, but delve deeper and you will learn that a pop tart is more than a mouth-scalding toasted snack, corduroy isn't just an unfashionable trouser, and burger flip describes something other than its exponent's immediate career prospects. It's a largely impenetrable world, but if you frequently drink Pepsi Max, own a bewildering array of headwear and can reel out your 180 times table quicker than Carol Vorderman, then you're halfway there. Alternatively, you could pull yourself a copy of *Supreme Snowboarding* and experience the white powder thrills without ever having to leave the sanctity of your PC den. Why would you want to do that? Because it's great. Here's how.

ALSO CONSIDER

TRICKSTYLE (Acclaim, £39.99) Plenty of boarding antics, but not much in the way of snow. PCZ#84, 78%

SNOW WAVE AVALANCHE (UK Action, £29.99) Unspectacular snowboard action. PCZ #76, 74%

SKI RACING (Sierra, £29.99) Muck. Anyway, everyone knows skiing is for ponces. PCZ #63, 56%

> **"Heading downhill feels breathtaking, and the game delivers the most realistic PC snowboarding experience to date"**

WINTER WONDERLAND

Supreme Snowboarding looks tremendous. You'll need a mother of a PC for the full effect, but not only do the graphics rock, they also rule, and clearly fail to suck. Dramatic winter landscapes are thrown around the screen with aplomb, everything appearing suitably crisp and sharp, superbly conveying the alpine freshness. The backdrops are photo-realistic, and the attention to detail is emphatic, from the spray off the board to the trail each rider leaves, and even the creases on their kecks. Races take place at four different times of day, and a great deal of effort has been made. For instance, instead of simply turning the brightness down, night racing has the slopes dramatically lit up with burning torches. Which is nice.

BOARDING SKOOL

There is little time for sight-seeing, though, as the pace of the game is astonishing. The sensation of motion is emphatic, and will have you lurching about in your chair like a fool. Heading downhill feels absolutely breathtaking at times, and the game easily delivers the most realistic snowboarding experience found on a PC to date. This speed would be unmanageable without solid control, but thankfully the game features some intuitive handling. With practice, you can soon be skimming off the snow like a natural, with precision control enabling you to push speed to the limit as well as allowing you to grab the obligatory phat air and then perform some seriously elaborate manoeuvres.

All the tricks one could realistically expect are in there, and provide a mild diversion. It's during the racing that the game comes into its own, though, offering high speed action against five other competitors in single-player mode, or up to seven over a network. There's a real sense of being involved in a race, with opponents often barging into you, simultaneously offering an array of insults.

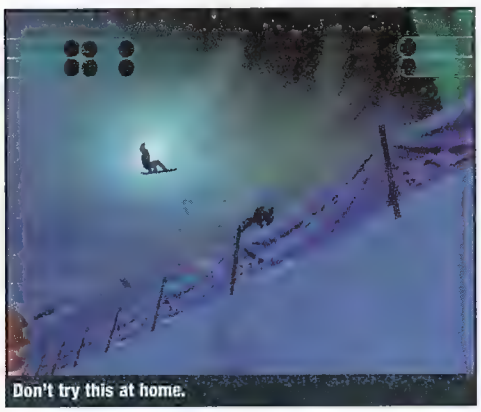
Snowboarding is a genuinely exhilarating sport, and there is no greater compliment than to say that *Supreme Snowboarding* captures some of that essence. This is definitely one game that lives up to its name. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Tremendous graphics • Exhilarating action • Great video footage • Half-decent music • Superb replays

DOWNERS Unforgiving • Occasionally disorientating • Dangerous courses

86 Like, totally awesome, dude

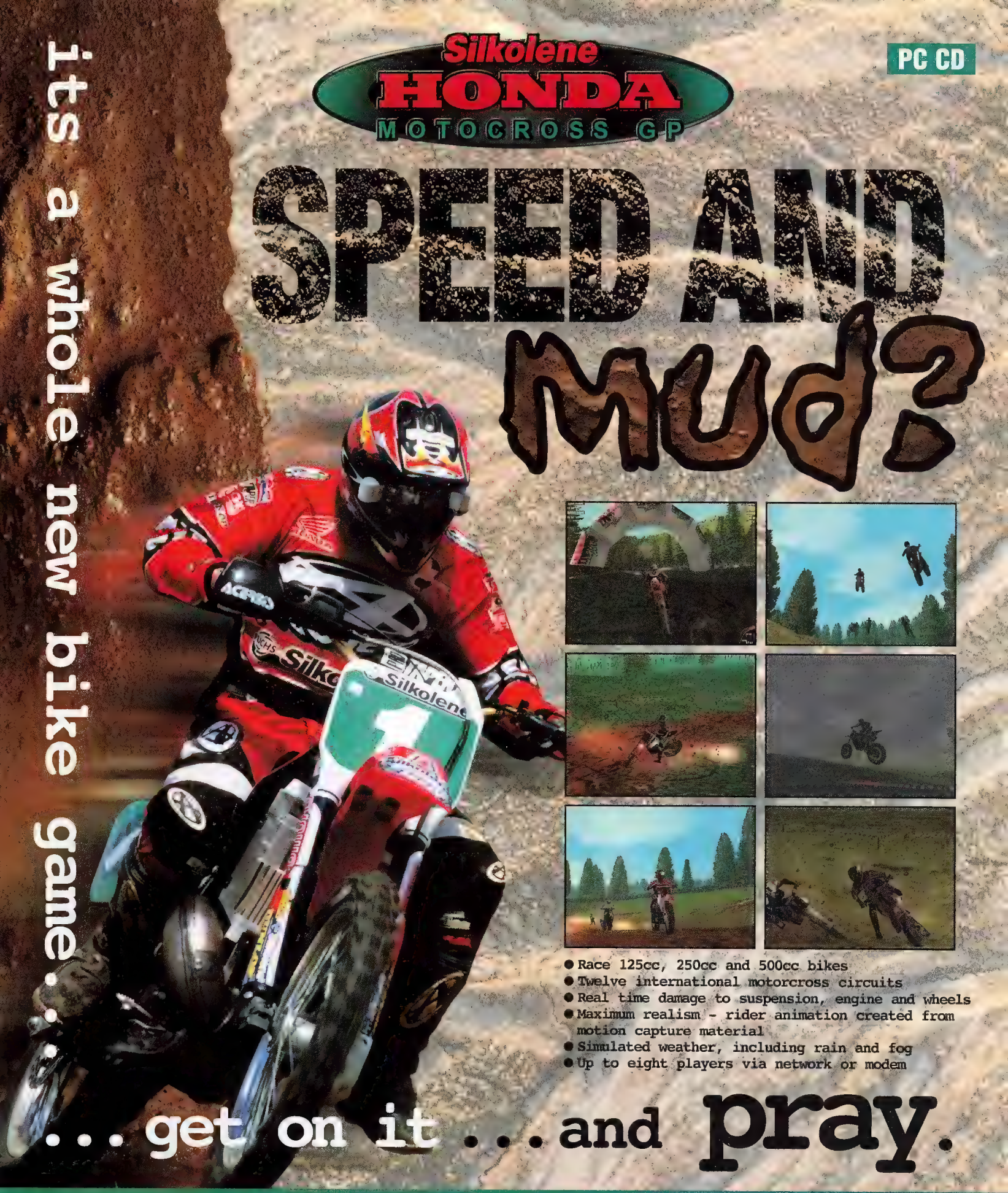

Don't try this at home.

Fast, furious and addictive.

Now that's what you call phat air.

Nobody likes a show-off.

Plunge headfirst into that and you'd know about it.



- Race 125cc, 250cc and 500cc bikes
- Twelve international motorcross circuits
- Real time damage to suspension, engine and wheels
- Maximum realism - rider animation created from motion capture material
- Simulated weather, including rain and fog
- Up to eight players via network or modem

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F: +31 499 476 046
E: midas@gamesarena.com

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Tunwells Court, 34 Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1QY
England
T: +44 1223 363 000
F: +44 1223 312 000
E: mail@midas-interactive.co.uk

Midas Interactive Entertainment GmbH
Girmes-Kreuz-Str.57
41564 Kaarst
Germany
T: +49 2131 66 1950
F: +49 2131 66 19555
E: mhuesges@swing-games.de

Midas Interactive Entertainment Pty
Unit 3/17 Leda Drive, Burleigh Junction
Queensland 4220
Australia
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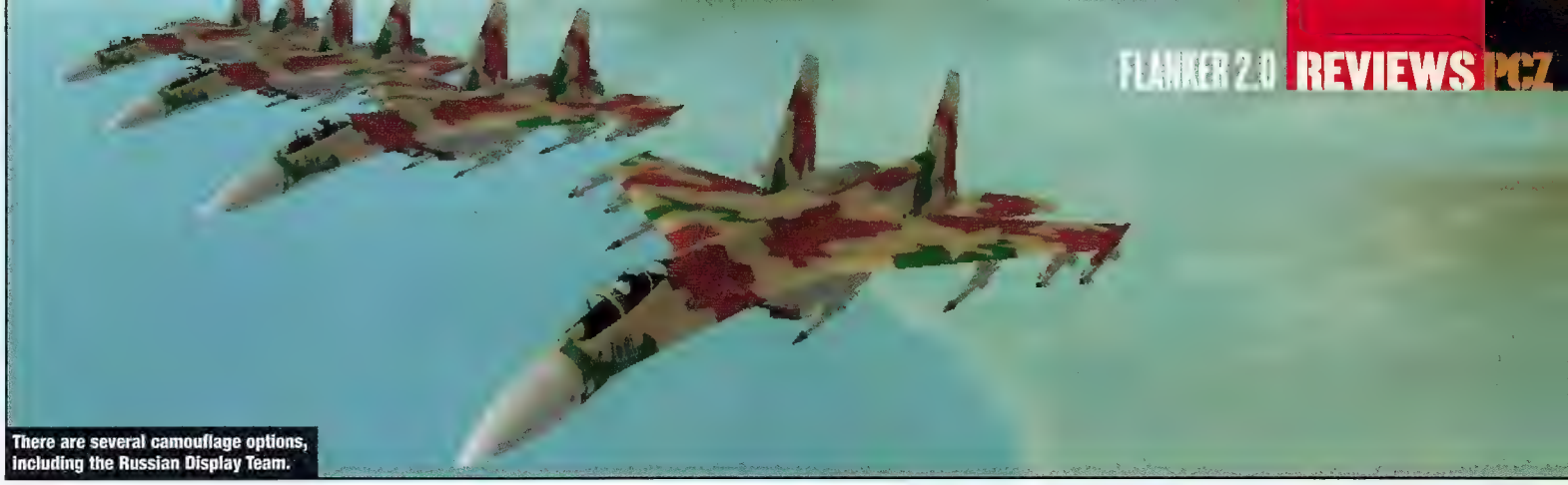


There are several camouflage options, including the Russian Display Team.

FLANKER 2.0

£34.99 • SSI • Out now

There's a very obvious pun in the title of this hardcore flight sim, but *Paul Presley*'s never been good at financial matters. He does masturbate a lot though.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Up the RAM to about 128Mb if you want full graphic options and try for at least a PII 300MHz processor

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

A funny thing. Apparently there have been reports of US flight sim fans returning *Flanker 2.0* to the shops after watching the opening FMV of a pair of SU-33s blowing up some good ol' Falcons and Hornets, outraged that the commie pinkos could ever defeat Uncle Sam. I've no idea if this is true or not, but if it helps in some small part to bring down America's reign as the world's number one superpower, then I'm happy to do my bit. Da!

As, it would seem, are SSI and the Russian programming team behind this very impressive piece of work. *Flanker 2.0* is what we in the industry call a flight sim par excellence and it proves that along with our boys at Digital Integration and DID (or the ones who used to be there anyway), we don't need the US of A to keep the genre alive thank you very much.

STEADY ON THE VITRIOL, TOSVARICH

A word of warning though. *Flanker 2.0* isn't for the newcomer. It's a beast to fly, a devil to understand and a monster of a simulation. Just getting a radar lock on a stationary target takes an inordinate amount of work. For once I actually felt as though flying a modern, military fighter was actually difficult. As it should be. I had become so used to the ease of US jets, that it took me three attempts just to take off without crashing.

It looks superb too. You may have read my review of *Flight Sim 2000* elsewhere in this magazine. *Flanker 2.0* shows just how to do city areas well. There's barely a building in the whole of the Crimean that hasn't been modelled, and yet it still flies smoothly on the average PC.

A FISTFUL OF ROUBLES

A friend of mine used to keep himself amused for hours on end with the mission editor in *F/A-18 Korea*. He'd put together some intricately plotted missions involving dozens of units, then simply sit back and watch the computer play them out. He'd never take part himself, just watch. He's what's known as a hardcore gamer. We had to have him committed after a while. He'd love the mission editor in *Flanker 2.0*–it's beyond excellent. It's the heart and soul of the whole game and almost makes up for the lack of any kind of dynamic campaign, career pilot modes or friendly presentation (it's a very sparse-looking game before taking off).

"The mission editor in *Flanker 2.0*– it's beyond excellent"

Flanker 2.0 has really got the lot. It's just that it takes some work to get the most out of it. The hardcore flight sim crowd will be quite happy to put that work into it of course, and they'll be the ones who get the biggest rewards. The casual pilot would be advised to look elsewhere however. This is no-frills flying. But then, true pilots wouldn't be seen dead in lace. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Very detailed • Very 'hardcore • Excellent mission editor

DOWNERS No dynamic campaign • Basic-looking presentation • Perhaps too 'hardcore' in places

86 **Excellent, but definitely for hard-core flight sim nuts.**

Visual effects are nicely handled throughout.

Blow up a Falcon up instead of flying it.

Nice big airports, music to a flight simmer's ears.

Why can't other flight sims do cities like this?

The vehicular texturing may not be the best, but it still looks good and means the game runs smoothly.

ALSO CONSIDER

Falcon 4 (MicroProse, £34.99) Immense simulation taking virtual war to new heights. Needs heavy patching though. *PCZ* #72, 95%

Total Air War (Infogrames, £24.99) See above, but comes with F-22s instead of F-16s. *PCZ* #68, 95%

F/A-18E Super Hornet (Digital Integration, £34.99) *Flanker 2.0* but with F/A-18s. Lots of 'Buddys instead of 'Comrades. *PCZ* #83, 88%

At least the mountains look bloody nice.

Runways and airports have been improved.

The Concorde (sporting British Airways livery). Thing is, you'd probably already downloaded it for the previous version.

MICROSOFT FLIGHT

★ £49.99 (£69.99 for the professional edition) • Microsoft • Out now

There's a novel idea – a flight simulator. And who are these Microsoft upstarts? It'll never catch on, says *Paul Presley*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Those Microsoft jokers, eh? Listen carefully, this is important – if you have *anything* less than a PIII, 128Mb RAM and a hi-end 3D card, forget it. Go back to *Flight Sim 98*. It just isn't worth the hassle. Even those specs can only be considered a minimum setup. Try for at least 256Mb RAM and a 450MHz processor.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

"Microsoft should take a look at how well military flight sims do it and learn a few lessons. This goes for terrain as well"

So, the latest version of Microsoft's flight sim operating system has arrived. Some history. With Flight Sim 95 and 98, Microsoft pretty much had the field to themselves. Sure there were some (extremely) specialist alternatives out there, but ask the man in the street to name a flight sim without guns and Gates's baby was the answer they'd give. Hence Microsoft got lazy. *(Rant on…)* Why bother with attractive front-ends or setup screens that made sense. Key configurations? Hell we'll just assign keys to various functions at random. Who's going to know. Sure throttle controls could be on the + and – keys like everyone else, but we'll stick them on the… Function keys! Yeah, that'll work.

Today it's a different story. In the last couple of years the civil aviation genre has exploded (not literally, that would be taking the realism aspects a bit too far). Sierra's *Pro Pilot*, *Fly!* from Terminal Reality and, of course, Looking Glass's *Flight Unlimited* series have served to both attract newcomers to the genre and make things more presentable. Have Microsoft learned from this with their latest title in the series? Have they fu**! *(Rant off.)*

I CAN'T DO THE ACCENT

First up, what's new? Fans of the series will be pleased to note that this time round Microsoft have thoughtfully included a manual with the game. A big one too. Over 300 pages, crammed with tips, flight lessons, aircraft descriptions, sectional maps, Uncle Tom Cobbly and all. Which is nice.

Also improved are the navigational options (you can generate flight plans based on VOR to VOR, GPS and commercial flight routes), on-board GPS systems (although the one in *Fly!* was better), the number of airports, the initial bank of planes (fly the Concorde!) and, of course, the graphics. Although here we hit the first of the game's problems.

Flight Sim 2000, as we mentioned in the Tech Specs panel, is ridiculously processor-hungry. If you don't have a minimum of 128MB RAM and a PIII chip then I would seriously hesitate before recommending you should buy it. You'll be getting frame rates of 1-5 per second at best, which makes smooth flying only possible if you're over barren, icy wastelands and makes landing impossible. There has been a problem identified with the simulation of the gyroscopic attitude indicators. Apparently they're *too* accurate and have been hogging the processor. A patch is being worked on, but this isn't really the only problem since disabling the instruments still led to jerk-filled flying – especially over heavily populated areas.

The biggest problem facing *Flight Sim 2000* isn't simply a bug in the instruments though. It's Microsoft's seemingly lazy attitude towards the gamer. Because they've forced themselves to rely on the pre-existing Flight Sim architecture in order to be backwards-compatible, they've ended up with all of the same basic presentation problems that were inherent in the previous versions. Change the view and you have to wait ten to twenty seconds while the game pauses and reloads all the cockpit artwork and the background scenery and the weather patterns and so on. Everyone else seems to do virtual cockpits, why not Microsoft? Want to set up a flight plan? Unfortunately you have to wait for the game to load in all of the parameters for the default flight (which can take anything up to ten minutes on low-end machines) before you can access the menus to change the settings. Why not put this on the front screen like everyone else?

I could list examples like this for ages but the bottom line is that until Microsoft make the game friendly to the novice, the Flight Sim range will only ever look an attractive proposition to its existing audience.

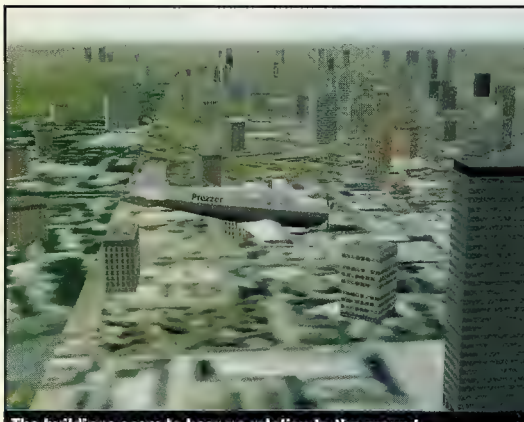
All the controls you could wish for. But can it boil an egg? I think not.

Rod Machado, pilot and 'humorist' discusses fashion.

The Amazon, apparently. I dunno, it should be more... jungly.

Sid and Doris Bonkers welcome you to their world.

Airline Transport Pilot
This document certifies that
Paul Presley
has successfully completed the Airline Transport Pilot Checkride, has met all examination standards and has been found to be properly qualified to exercise the privileges of a Flight Simulator Airline Transport Pilot
Flight Simulator 2000
Me am da best. You get certificates when you finish training.


The buildings seem to bear no relation to the ground.

SIMULATOR 2000

ATTACK OF THE ANORAK

Luckily, that audience is a pretty sizeable one (at least in the US, over here I'm not so sure), but the big question remains, 'does *Flight Sim 2000* offer enough to warrant an upgrade from your existing version?' The answer is a hesitant yes. Visually it's better, but not by *that* much. Textures are more defined and the terrain elevation data does mean that mountains, hills and valleys are a lot better. City areas still look pretty ordinary – just flat blurry texture-maps with buildings thrown randomly on top. There's no sense that they belong to the landscape, no feeling of cohesion.

The core to civil aviation sims is how they fly and, yes, *Flight Sim 2000* flies very well (as long as you have the hardware). Unfortunately it doesn't fly any better or worse than the rivals. They each boast that their flight models are the most accurate you'll get yet they all pretty much feel identical. To test this, I flew identical routes from London to Manchester in both *FS2000* and *FS98* and other than having slightly more detailed graphics, it could have been the same game. I had added navigation in *FS2000* (which is a boon), but that was about all.

Because the flight models are all about as real as they're going to get, all you can judge these games on is how well they present themselves to their audience. *FS2000* fails on this count, but its existing audience aren't going to care. They're willing to put in the necessary hours and buy the necessary hardware to make it work. They'll even enjoy themselves all the more for it. (Each to their own – *Ed*) In summary, *FS2000* is still the most realistic flight sim, if not the most enjoyable. PCZ

Cuba, home of cigars and virgins.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Global • Looks better than previous versions • Flying lessons • Navigational aids • Expansion possibilities

DOWNERS Still looks very 'patchwork' • Horrendous hardware requirements to run smoothly

80 Accomplished flight sim if you've the hardware to run it

ALSO CONSIDER

FLY! (Take 2 Interactive, £34.99) Tried to compete with Microsoft earlier this year and made a noble stab at it, too. It's better in terms of presentation and navigational options, but doesn't have quite the same authority in the air. Expansion packs are starting to arrive, albeit slowly, and a sequel is on the way. *PCZ* #81, 70%

FLIGHT UNLIMITED II/III (Eidos Interactive/EA, £12.99/£34.99) The best when it comes to just flying, but you're limited to San Francisco (in *FUII*) or Seattle (in *FUIII*). In many ways, though, by limiting their horizon, Looking Glass have made more realistic worlds than the 'global' simulators. *PCZ* #60/82, 84%/90%

MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98 (Microsoft, £39.99) If *FS 2000* isn't going to run adequately on your machine, your next best option is to stick with Microsoft's previous entry in the series. The basic model may look a little sparse compared to today's edition, but there's so much in the way of expansion available from the Internet and specialist sources that it more than makes up for it. *PCZ* #55, 94%

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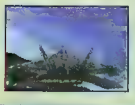

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THE WHEEL OF TIME

£34.99 • GT Interactive • Out now

The wheels keep rollin' along on the 3D shooter bandwagon. *Richie Shoemaker* finds one about to fall off

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32 Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 500Mb Hard drive space, 3D graphics accelerator **WE SAY** Don't expect a great performance, even with a PII/233 and 64Mb RAM

Why is it that a game combining the rich fantasy worlds of Richard Jordan and the power of the *Unreal* engine is, well, a bit nondescript? It's a difficult one to get your head around. Here we have a story from one of the best fantasy writers of modern times, one that millions across the world have read and enjoyed. It's brought to life via one of the finest 3D graphics engines ever made. For most of the game, it's superbly presented: the indoor locations are especially grand, after each mission you are treated to some of the best cut-scenes ever seen and while playing the game your trigger finger is permanently poised and your mind engaged. The puzzles are challenging and the atmosphere creepy, with some beautiful pyrotechnics and a range of spells even Merlin himself would be hard pushed to conjure up. And yet I can honestly say that at no point while playing *The Wheel Of Time* did my jaw drop or adrenaline fill my hardened veins.

For all its many impressive features, it didn't quite gel together. It felt like just another first-person action game. No, I'll rephrase that, it felt like I was playing *Unreal* all over again. It's all down to the goddamn AI. Hurl a fireball at the feet of an oncoming Trolloc (I feel a pun coming on) and he'll quickly slide aside in that typical *Unreal*-istic fashion. Not a good start then.

NEVER MIND THE TROLLOCS

Inconsistency is the problem with *Wheel Of Time*. Due care has indeed been lavished on many parts of the game, yet the gameplay side of things seems to have been brushed over. As an example, in one level early in the game, you find yourself exploring a beautifully decorated castle. One of the finest rooms ever seen in any game lies within, and yet its only purpose in the game is so that you can stock up on a few spell ingredients. You could be walking through some areas without ever noticing the grand ceilings or fanned buttresses. It all seems a bit wasteful.

Unlike most 3D shooters, with their 10 generic weapons, *Wheel Of Time* gives you 40 spells, or Ter'angreal. Starting off with a powerful and unlimited air-guff, you eventually find fireballs, darts, decay spells and seekers. Not all the spells are offensive in nature either, the ability to detect traps soon finds its way into your repertoire, as does the ability to swap places with creatures behind locked doors. Later on you can summon Champions,

> **"Due care has indeed been lavished on many parts of the game, yet the gameplay side of things seems to have been brushed over"**

disguise yourself as one of the enemy, or summon a whirlwind to throw creatures to their doom. While all these effects look fine and dandy and have a purpose throughout the game, the enemies you encounter look far too generic, even comical. By far the most spine-chilling beastie you encounter is an ethereal mist that snakes towards you.

TWO IN ONE

Developers Legend Entertainment (who are now working on *Unreal 2*), have always said that *Wheel Of Time* was 'two games in one' – single and multiplayer. The multiplayer game is indeed separate and varied. As well as your traditional deathmatch levels, the one new variant is the Citadel game. In this you begin in your own castle, with the aim being to steal a predefined number of Seals from your opponents. Before starting you can set traps, build walls and station a number of creatures to defend your base, while you go out in search of treasure. It reminded me of a 3D rendition of *Magic & Mayhem*. I won't even pretend to have tried it online as at the time of writing the game isn't out to find anyone to play against, but in the office we had a blast. Basically, it's different and highly original. You can even build your own citadels with the built-in editor. For sure, if *Wheel Of Time* does catch on, it'll be on this feature alone.

Challenging and engrossing for the most part, playing *Wheel Of Time* is like playing a computer game rather than taking part in a convincing drama where you feel you *are* in another world. While the multiplayer game is original and pleasantly diverting, it's certainly not enough to recommend the game above what must surely be the best fantasy action game currently available – *Heretic II*. If we had some convincing-looking and more intelligent monsters, the single-player game would certainly have been a lot more enjoyable. Robert Jordan fans will find enough to keep them going, the hardcore on the other hand, are sure to be a little disappointed. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

HEXEN II (Activision, £9.99) Old and cheap 3D fantasy shooter based on the old *Quake* engine. *Wheel Of Time* is better. Just. ***PCZ* #54, 94%**

HERETIC II (Activision, £29.99) Third-person mix of *Quake* and *Tomb Raider*. Superbly fast-paced and visually lush, it lacks the depth for hardcore fantasy fans. ***PCZ* #72, 83%**

HALF-LIFE (Sierra, £29.99) A year on and *Half-life* is still the best shooter ever made. No spell casting though, but magical all the same. ***PCZ* #71, 95%**

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Great story well told • Loads of spells and some original puzzles • Innovative multiplayer game • Impressive architecture

DOWNERS Gameplay lacks depth – strangely detached • Bog-standard AI • Generic monsters • No originality

68 Competent, but could try harder

Pretty, 'ain't it?
This one thinks she's well 'ard – well she's not.

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"Get in the hoop!"

That'll be a penalty.

NBA LIVE 2000

£34.99 • EA Sports • Out now

Apparently, white men can't jump. Some days, *Steve Hill* can barely stand.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** At least a P300 with 64 Mb of RAM and a decent 8Mb 3dfx or D3D card

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Judging by the proliferation of games carrying it, the NBA licence would appear to be freely available at the moment, albeit at an extravagant cost. EA Sports have had their hands on it for a while, and generally knock out a basketball game this time every year, to the extreme delight of Americans, and the blind indifference of the rest of the world.

The *NBA Live* series is widely regarded to be the best of its kind though, and this millennial instalment is no different. It provides a comprehensive simulation of the hooped game, with little recourse to the gimmickry that blights a number of other efforts. The graphics are predictably excellent – from the reflections in the court to the facial animations of the players, and the authenticity is second to none. The trademark EA Sports polish is clearly evident, from the seamless commentary to the numerous video clips, accompanied by the obligatory music of black origin, including such big names as George Clinton, Run DMC and Naughty By Nature, not to mention the estimable talents of Rahzel & The NBA Live Orchestra. There's even an option to view a half-time cheerleader show, with an array of scantily-clad all-American gals shaking their booties in a most vigorous and suggestive manner. Which is nice…

BASKET CASE

As for the gameplay, it's largely the same as last year, and in all honesty, a cheap copy of *NBA Live 99* would offer no less fun. EA generally stick to the old adage 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' and this would appear to be no exception. It's still a superb rendition of the sport, with all the spins, feints, shimmies and slam-dunks anyone could reasonably expect. A degree of manual dexterity is required, with pretty much every button on the joypad utilised in some fashion. However, with practice it becomes second nature, and you can soon be pulling off fancy moves like there's no tomorrow.

What *NBA Live 2000* does bring to the party is five different All-Stars teams from the last five decades. Clearly nobody in this country will recognise more than one or two of the players, but can take solace in the fact that the 70's side sport some particularly risible afro haircuts. There's also an option to take the game back to the ghettos and play out a one-on-one match on a street court. This option carries some kind of vague Michael Jordan endorsement, although the chances of multi-millionaire Jordan appearing on a street court are slim, to say the least. And yet there's more – a three-point shoot-out mode against the clock, essentially a glorified round of *It's A Knockout*.

"The trademark EA Sports polish is clearly evident, from the seamless commentary to the numerous video clips, accompanied by the obligatory music of black origin"

Entire seasons can be played out, as can a 25-year career mode: never gonna use it, at least not this side of a prison cell. The real value comes in the playoffs, as you attempt to take a side to the ultimate prize over as many games as you choose. Clearly, this being basketball, it's only the last few minutes of any game that counts, but it's those minutes that make *NBA Live 2000* a game worth playing. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

NBA LIVE 99 (EA Sports, £34.99) Last year's model is almost indistinguishable, and worth getting on the cheap. *PCZ* #73, 88%

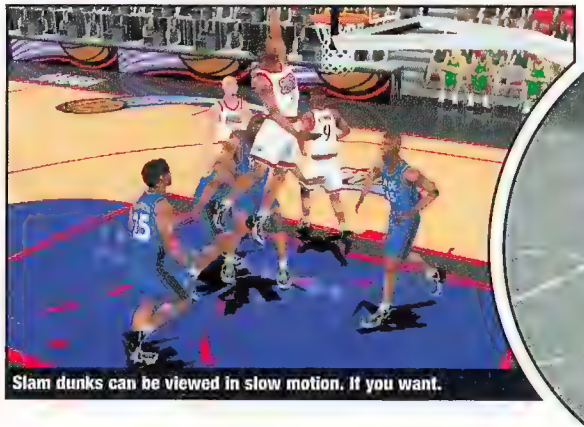
NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2000 (Microsoft, £34.99) Microsoft in yet another good game shock. *PCZ* #82, 83%

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Extremely authentic • Shedloads of options • Realistic crowd • Half naked cheerleaders

DOWNERS Same as last year • Bewildering statistics • American-oriented

83 Same as it ever was


Slam dunks can be viewed in slow motion. If you want.

You, outside, now. Okay.

Shaquille O'Neal, aided by his 7'1" stature.

Use the long voxel grass for cover.

DELTA FORCE 2

£34.99 • Novalogic • Out January 2000

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII, Celeron or better **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** At least a Pentium II 500MHz or P233 chip with TNT/TNT2 or ATI Rage Fury graphics card

Delta Force 2 is the latest entry into the already crowded tactical military simulator market, but it's radically different in its use of voxel graphics as opposed to the textured 3D polygons we're all used to.

You control a single, well-equipped soldier in an assortment of ready-to-go, single-player missions and five progressive campaigns. Fighting alongside you are up to four other team-mates over whom you've no control – despite having a neatly-presented command map, complete with waypoints and objectives. You can't even tell them what weapons to choose and use.

So with no real strategy involved, your task is simply to look after numero uno. If it moves – shoot it, if it doesn't – blow it up. And if you can complete the mission objectives at the same time – anything from laser designating tanks for air strikes to ambushing convoys and rescuing hostages – then good luck to you. It's all great fun and extremely hectic, if ultimately, rather shallow.

While the beautiful voxel graphics engine turns out colourful, ultra-realistic terrain, it isn't helped by any 3D cards apart from the 32-bit TNT, TNT2 and Rage Fury. If you happen to own one of those, you'll be in heaven. If not, you'll need at least a 500MHz Pentium for smooth play, and something even faster if you want to try higher resolutions than 640 by 480.

Novalogic have put gameplay first and realism well down the list. The game itself feels like a cross between an Action Man cartoon and a Bond movie – all bullets and blood but no brains. Lacking the grim realism of *Spec Ops 2* or the strong tactical elements of *Hidden & Dangerous* or *Rogue Spear*, this game remains easy to play and highly entertaining but has disappointingly few weapons to choose from and only average sound effects.

It has the usual first and third person views, plus a movable camera and a cool on-screen sniper scope. The bundled map editor, built-in Voice-Over-Net technology and wide variety of deathmatch modes makes for good multiplayer sport, but the mediocre animation, blocky graphics and lack of real depth leave it well behind its competitors.

Andrew Wright

PCZ VERDICT 63%

Scenarios include knocking out everything from trains to planes...

Unfortunately your team-mates don't do anything you tell them...

CREATURES 3

£29.99 • Mindscape • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** That should do nicely

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Creatures 3 offers few surprises to those already familiar with previous *Creatures* titles, but remains highly addictive for the many *Creatures* fans around the globe.

Based this time on a spaceship, the same rules that governed the first two titles also apply here – hatch and breed your Norns and help them to establish a safe world for future generations. For the first time, the game allows you to start the game with an already hatched starter generation consisting of two Norns who are ready to breed.

The object of the game is to establish a thriving Norn population on the spaceship and to eliminate the existing and evil Grendel population who, unless destroyed, will hunt your Norns and possibly eat the unhatched eggs (shock horror). The game lends you a helping hand here as the Norns, for the first time, have had a social element introduced allowing them to interact together. You can use this to get them to create machinery to hunt down the Grendels and finally rid the spaceship of their fetid presence. In summary then, a good addition to the already hugely popular and best-selling series of games.

Helen Woods

PCZ VERDICT 83%

Ahh look it's a cutsie fluffy animal.

More breeding fun.

AGE OF WONDERS

£34.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133MHz **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Pentium II 200 or higher a must and 64Mb RAM

The 90's were all about recycling. Recycle your rubbish, recycle your old papers and now recycle your computer games. And *Age of Wonders* is one of the best examples of recycling seen to date.

Games are recycled all of the time. No crime if you improve on the originals, but sadly this fails to even do that. The turn based combat system is reminiscent of something from 1996. The research spells shows you what you are going to discover. And the environment is beards, swords and leather trousers. Not a bad thing if you like old, rock clubs, but you would have expected this genre to advance slightly in the past few years.

A trailer for the new "Neighbours From Hell".

But despite this, the game is fun. You do find yourself wanting to play for 'one more hour' – just to see what the next map's gonna be like. But with a thirty four quid price ticket, you have got to be a fan of the genre. If not, then avoid.

Dan Emery

PCZ VERDICT 55%

"Eye spy... some annoying american tourists."

"My condolences for the adventure's death."

GABRIEL KNIGHT III

£34.99 • Sierra • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** More memory and a 3D card

There's no easy way to say this, but the game that adventure fans have patiently been waiting for has proved to be one of the biggest disappointments of the year so far, at least as far as this reviewer is concerned. A shock revelation then, that would merit a detailed explanation forthwith. Trouble is, where do I start? Well, it looks pretty rubbish: the graphics are laughable with background scenery looking out of place compared to its surrounding environment, and larger-than-life characters portrayed in an odd cartoon-style that seems hopelessly at odds with the sinister nature of the plot. No marks for visuals then, yet the problem is made worse with the introduction of a 3D interface that does nothing but confuse the player at every turn. Rather than give Gabriel a first-person perspective (which would have made sense given the whole game is in 3D), a third person view is used and players move Gabe round by pointing at the location they want him to go to. There's nothing wrong with that in theory, but his movements are slow and clumsy. A better option is to use the free-roaming camera to explore the environment, which often produces hilarious results: using this camera you can often get Gabriel to examine and manipulate things that are nowhere near him. Come on guys, you could have done better than this given the amount of time you've had to produce this game. Having said all that, die-hard *Gabriel* fans will no doubt get something out of it if they persist with it, the rest of you however will wonder what place this dated effort has in a market which has recently received such classics as *Grim Fandango* and *Discworld Noir*. So although *Gabriel Knight III* is not a complete write-off then, it's definitely a missed opportunity, and surely the last nail in the coffin for adventure games as we know them.

David Stark

PCZ VERDICT **60%**

BUST-A-MOVE 4

£19.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P100 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Unless you've got a high end machine, forget about it

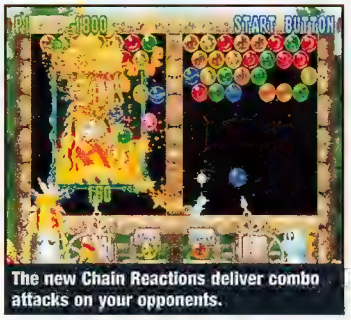
We reviewed *Puzzle Bobble 2* last issue and awarded it a desultory 30%. Our resident charmer, Charlie Brooker, said that you might as well invite the developers round to 'piss in your eyes.' Poor graphics and jerky animations, y'see.

This is the latest game in the series (forget the name change and just concentrate on the number to avoid confusion) and the graphics are still piss poor. What's worse, you can only play it in full screen mode if you've got a decent PC. We tried it out on a P233 and we could only play it in a window. This is unforgivable and the direct result of a lazy port that feels like it's actually PlayStation code that's running under emulation.

It's a wasted opportunity because there's nothing wrong with the game itself, and the new features, including the pulley system and chain reactions, work really well. If you've got a P2 then it's worth considering otherwise you may as well forget it. It's a simple game and if the developers can't be bothered to convert it properly, we can't be bothered to recommend it to anyone.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT **30%**



The new Chain Reactions deliver combo attacks on your opponents.

Balance the bubbles or you're out.

Another jump and another golden carrot. Yawn.

BUGS BUNNY: LOST IN TIME

£29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** All major sound cards and 3D cards **WE SAY** Does the job

Spare a quick thought for the classic cartoon characters that used to keep us entertained while we were waiting for computer games to be invented. Because nowadays, rather than getting the respect they deserve, elder statesmen like Bugs and co. are getting coded into second-rate platform games.

Which is what you've got here. And one that rips all the good ideas from Super Mario 64 without having a clue about the single most important factor – level design. If you like the idea of choppy graphics, woeful voice impersonations and precision jumping made nigh-on impossible by a quirky control system, then this is going to be right up your passage.

We'd prefer to shun second rate PlayStation conversions and spend our time following more rewarding pursuits. Like crossing busy roads with our eyes shut.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT **24%**

Darkstone: So many spells you could cast for hours.

Better late than never.

Wander. Kill. Level up. Classic stuff.

DARKSTONE

£39.99 • EA • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card
WE SAY P300 64Mb RAM

From Delphine, the team responsible for some of the best adventure games of all time (*Future Wars*, *Operation Stealth*), comes an RPG which at first glance appears to be nothing remotely special. Start the game in a village, wander outside, jump in a dungeon, hit things on the head (or chuck spells at them), go back to the village, restock, and repeat to fade.

Not the stuff that RPG classics are made of, but it gets better. All the game's characters have special skill-sets that really affect how you play. Magic-users can recharge mana, fighters have special abilities to get round traps and locks etc – there's a huge amount of skills to choose from. And the spells comprise an almost endless list of offensive and attack spells.

But what about the game? Well, it's pretty standard stuff really, dungeon-searching and monster-dispensing prevails, and it *does* get repetitive, particularly when you've found the exit to the next level and know you'll miss something if you don't search the whole dungeon. so laborious map-covering is needed. The interface is a little clumsy too, with simple things like moving your character round to face the right direction before they get wasted by an oncoming horde sometimes proving unnecessarily difficult. But these are minor flaws in an otherwise entertaining game. With so many skills and spells to choose from, *Darkstone* offers a predictable but enjoyable journey through a reasonably attractive landscape, and you can hardly ask for much more than that. Oh, and the box is nice.

David Stark

PCZ VERDICT 70%

RC RACERS

£19.99 • Sierra • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P90 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Don't bother

PC ZONE PANTS

Some games are just so bad, they should never have been released. *RC Racing* is a good example and the fact that it's been buried in Sierra's new 'family fun' range suggests that the publishers agree with us on this one.

It's *Micro Machines* without any of the innovative tracks, cool power-ups or playability. The graphics are dire and the sound-effects consist of DOS-style bleeps and a disturbing background chattering that we presume is supposed to be an 'authentic' engine noise. Gameplay is worse. Until you memorise the tracks, you can't tell where you're supposed to be going, so inevitably you end up driving down dead-ends and U-bends. Well that is until you realise that you could probably have had more fun taking swimming lessons on the Titanic.

This game is pants' it's official.

We were bored of it after about three minutes and we reckon you'd probably get more fun reading the Sierra catalogue that's been stuck in the box. If this is the sort of 'fun' that 'families' get up to in the privacy of their own homes then we reckon that some sort of mandatory birth control program should be enforced.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT 18%

Don't let him invade your space.

Oh, my god, it's the 80's again.

SPACE INVADERS

£19.99 • Activision • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P150 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** What more do you want?

Activision have come up trumps with this highly addictive remake of the classic game *Space Invaders*. For those of you who don't remember the original version, the object of the game is to destroy alien ships as they move across and down your screen (don't laugh, it was good at the time). The game is divided into planets, each of which comprises ten levels. Sounds simple – and initially it is. However, as you progress through the levels, the aliens become more sophisticated in their weaponry. The killer bosses at the end of each planet closely resemble Genghis Khan.

New features include the power ups – as you kill four aliens of the same type you receive a special type of weapon such as diagonal fire or Laser Blaster's. The mother ships, which intermittently pass across the screen, give you bonuses when you destroy them – these vary from extra lives, to shields, to double shots.

The multiplay aspect of the game is new and again very enjoyable. Exactly the right sort of game to play with a mate when you come home from the pub. They don't make them like this anymore, more's the pity.

Helen Woods

PCZ VERDICT 75%

B-HUNTER

£34.99 • Midas Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** That'll do, although a 3D card speeds things up considerably

I ran out of interesting ways to say 'this game is average' some time in 1998 – coincidentally about the same time the PlayStation was at its height and we were swamped with console conversions. *B-Hunter.* Is. An. Average. Game. Which is a shame because it looked so nice during the brief ten minutes I spent with it at last year's ECTS. Having spent the last month with it though, it's quickly become apparent that ten minutes is about all the lasting power it has.

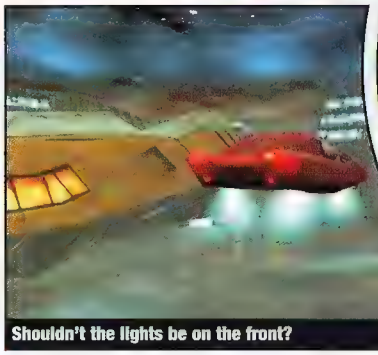
Take the flying car and perpetually dark future city bits from Blade Runner, add a basic shoot-the-target gameplay element and that's *B-Hunter.* As you first whip around the city areas it all seems so promising. The sense of scale is good. The different areas all look nice and add variety. It all feels like a bustling city. Then, a few missions down the line, you find yourself constantly doing the same things over and over again and the initial thrill fades quicker than an Englishman's tan.

It's basic arcade blasting nonsense, there's nothing wrong with this. It's just there's nothing particularly right about it either. PlayStation fare circa 1998 with today's end-of-the-century graphics. Now we here at yer Zone don't mean to be snooty about console games, but as a great man once said, when you've eaten caviar it's hard to go back to sausages. And *B-Hunter* is a sausage.

Paul Presley

PCZ VERDICT 50%

Bang, bang. Snore.



Shouldn't the lights be on the front?

Never trust a game with "hunter" in the title.

Developed by Fox Interactive, if you hadn't guessed.

The obligatory fight sequence in full swing.

NHL CHAMPIONSHIP 2000

£34.99 • Activision • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Optimistic at least. It just about gets by on a P333 with 64Mb of RAM and a Voodoo 2 card

Despite the best efforts of Channel 5, ice hockey has yet to penetrate the masses in this country, popular only amongst the perennially nocturnal. And gamesplayers it would seem – although the two are hardly mutually exclusive. This is the second NHL title in as many months, and follows hot on the heels of EA Sports' *NHL 2000.*

Unfortunately the only thing *NHL Championship 2000* adds is a word in the title. A travesty of timing, they could have got away with it had we not already seen *NHL 2000,* but unfortunately this is inferior in almost every department. Only very slightly though, and it's still a perfectly playable version of the game of ice hockey. You can even take control of the non-world renowned Great Britain team, and it's quite easy to while away a few hours.

Steve Hill

PCZ VERDICT 65%

FOX SPORTS NBA BASKETBALL 2000

£34.99 • Activision • Out Now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P300 with 64Mb RAM and top of the range graphics accelerator

Where once EA's *NBA Live* series ruled alone in the seedy realms of basketball simulation, we are now spoilt for choice. We've recently seen Microsoft's excellent *NBA Inside Drive* and now Fox Sports prepares to enter the arena with their own brand of freaky athletes and hoop-wreckers. The question is, does anybody in this country care? Well, on the strength of this game, it's hard to see anybody really caring. *NBA Basketball 2000* takes on an inherently spectacular sport and magically transforms it into the single most boring activity since delousing was introduced as an Olympic event. The graphics, even on a highly specced machine, are angular, jerky and totally uninspiring, while the gameplay is so non-existent it would have you hopping mad if it hadn't sedated you into unconsciousness first. Apart from that, it's fantastic.

Men throwing balls has never been so dull.

Mark Hill

PCZ VERDICT 42%

L to R: ✪ Mark Hill's favourite car is the DeLorean ✪ Charlie Brooker's favourite car is the Mini Metro ✪ Richie Shoemaker's favourite car is the Lada Estate ✪ Paul Mallinson's favourite car is the Toyota Celica ✪ Steve Hill's favourite car is Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

PCZ SUPERTEST DRIVING

✪ PHOTOGRAPHY Simon Clay
VENUE The Garage On The Green, Fulham

Breakneck.

Carmageddon II.

Driver.

GAMES

The number of quality driving games available to buy on PC is astounding. Once again, the *PC ZONE* team meet to select the game of a genre. At the wheel: *Paul Mallinson*

To you – the common or garden gaming junkie – driving games are probably the quickest fix money can buy. Racing down a twisty-turny track with aggressive opponents nudging your back bumper at 200 miles an hour can be an exhilarating experience, but only if you feel fully in control of your vehicle and are allowed to build the confidence to put your foot down.

Most modern driving games go further than simple track races, though. Gone are the days when driving games had three courses and a sprinkling of meaningless cars – nowadays we're treated to properly licensed vehicles (or extremely close renditions of them) and amazingly realistic roads on which to open them up. Physics modelling is also important. In this day and age even simple, fun driving games – like those featured here – fall subject to criticism if they fail to make you feel like your car is properly gripping the road.

But let's not get too carried away with the realism angle here. The games featured in this Supertest are not driving simulations (that is another feature in itself), they are driving *games*. To us, they represent the best of both worlds – they combine fun with realism in a manner that is instantly

Midtown Madness.

Need For Speed Road Challenge.

Rollcage.

accessible, and the best of the bunch is almost certainly worth buying if you're after that ultimate gaming high.

BREAKNECK

Mallo: *Breakneck* is too removed from reality to be enjoyable.
Charlie: What do you mean, removed from reality?!
Mallo: It's a cartoon driving game, whether it looks like one or not.
Steve: It's a bloody game!
Everyone: *(Uproar)*
Mallo: *Breakneck* is hyper real – it looks and feels out of context.
Charlie: What do you want, *Grim Northern Bastard Driving*?
Steve: Or *M25 Simulator*?
Mallo: I want some degree of realism. I don't want to be zooming around at 400 miles an hour in a go-kart. I think it looks shit, and the trees look bloody horrible as well.
Mark: You can drive right through 'em.
Mallo: *Breakneck* feels unrealistic and wrong.
Steve: It wasn't pretending to be real. It still looks great, though.
Charlie: It's got loads of tracks.
Steve: And thousands of cars. It's a racing game. Okay, so you'll have forgotten about it within a week, but then how many of them don't you forget?
Mallo: It was also held back by the fact that it was made by Germans…
Steve: Yep, I'll give you that.
Mallo: …They had all these cars that were realistic, with idiot paint jobs…
Steve: If anything, there were too many cars.
Mallo: …A hideous menu system, too.
Steve: The career side of the game works but it looks like an abomination.
Mallo: And that 'Eddie'… it made me want to scream. Only Germans could have come up with something as bad as that. It got turned straight off. The menu system looked like it had been made by a dyslexic chimp with one eye.
Charlie: No it didn't. You're exaggerating.
Steve: Look, Charlie, it *was* poorly designed.
Mallo: Appallingly designed.
Steve: It could have been better.
Mallo: It could have been a *lot* better.
Steve: Utter rubbish.
Mallo: They should have got some crack menu design team in to save the day. It would have made all the difference. As it is, it would probably have been better for them to drop the career side of the game.
Charlie: It would probably have cost a lot of money. I quite like it. If I was looking for a *Ridge Racer*-type arcade game…
Mallo: You think it's comparable to *Ridge Racer*? You're joking.
Charlie: Why?
Mallo: Because *Ridge Racer* feels really good to play.
Charlie: *Breakneck* looks nicer than *Ridge Racer.*
Mallo: Okay, so it's got a higher frame rate, and there's a lot more in it, but surely racing games are more about how the car 'feels', rather than looks or content?
Charlie: *(Laughing)* You're sick!
Mallo: I'm talking about being able to slide around corners with confidence. Racing games have to offer precision and control…
Charlie: Did you play it on keyboard?

Mallo: Keyboard, force feedback joystick and steering wheel. It was better on steering wheel.
Steve: Of course it was.
Charlie: I bet if you played *Ridge Racer* on keys you'd probably think it was a bit shit. And you'd probably also think: "Why is it such low resolution, and why is there only the one track?"…
Mallo: The latest version of *Ridge Racer*…
Charlie: Type four.
Mallo: …Is better than *Breakneck*. The courses in *Breakneck* might as well be straight – it might as well be drag racing – it's stupidly fast.
Charlie: It's called *Breakneck*, for Christ's sake!
Steve: Exactly!
Mallo: Have you tried playing the faster cars? It's not worth it.
Charlie: You just can't handle it.
Mark: You're shit.
Mallo: It just wasn't that much fun. *Breakneck* is a very straightforward, formulaic racing game…
Charlie: I think you're being a little harsh – you're just taking your bad temperament out on this game.

> **"The racing line is through bloody trees and over hills! I spent more time in the air"**
> MALLO IS LESS THAN IMPRESSED WITH *BREAKNECK*

Mark: You can race with weapons!
Steve: Yeah, you get to chuck bombs at each other.
Mallo: Weapons in games such as these tend to ruin them. If you want weapons, you might as well go play *SCARS*.
Mark: What was that?
Mallo: Dire Ubi Soft game with animals racing on buggies. Nintendo-type stuff. Awful. Thing is, Nintendo are one of the few companies that have actually married racing and combat successfully.
Steve: *Mario Kart.*
Mark: Multiplayer *Mario Kart 64* is one of the best games ever.
Mallo: The Super Nintendo version was really good as well.
Charlie: I used to like *Road Rash* on the Mega Drive.
Steve: I used to like *Chequered Flag* on the Spectrum.
Mallo: *Chequered Flag* is piss. Absolute rubbish. Have you seen it recently? Big square tyres. I saw an original *Pole Position* in an arcade the other day – that was really bad, too. Driving games tend to age very quickly.
Steve: *(Prophetically, voice rising)* But the world's changing – entertainment's changing!
Mallo: In retrospect, some racing games have stood the test of time whereas others haven't. And the ones that have still *feel* good to play.
Charlie: Simulations, yeah.
Steve: You said these games aren't sims, yet you're barking on about unrealism.
Mallo: What I'm saying is that these games should look as realistic as possible, but realism should not be allowed to get in the way of the gameplay.
Richie: If a game looks real, but acts cartoony, then that doesn't mix.
Steve: It looks quite realistic – they look like real roads.
Mark: The tracks are too limiting for my liking. Most seem too thin for these great big massive cars.
Steve: Yeah, they are a bit thin.
Mallo: That's not the only thing about the tracks. As we've become accustomed to, it's a case of "in England, you get dry stone walls and cottages…"
Steve: Stonehenge on one side and Big Ben on the other.
Everyone: *(Laughs).*
Mallo: But that's the category this game falls into. *Midtown Madness*, *Driver*, *Need For Speed Road Challenge* – all these games are a lot more enjoyable because they have realistic elements in them: cities to drive around, cars coming at you from the other direction, missions to go on, but this is nothing more than a run-of-the-mill racing game. It suffers from 'generica' – it's a purely generic racing game.
Steve: Generica – good idea for a band name, that.
Everyone: *(Laughs).*
Mallo: *Breakneck* is the game I like the least here.
Steve: Well, piss off then.
Richie: Every car followed the racing line to the book.
Mallo: The racing line in *Breakneck* is through bloody

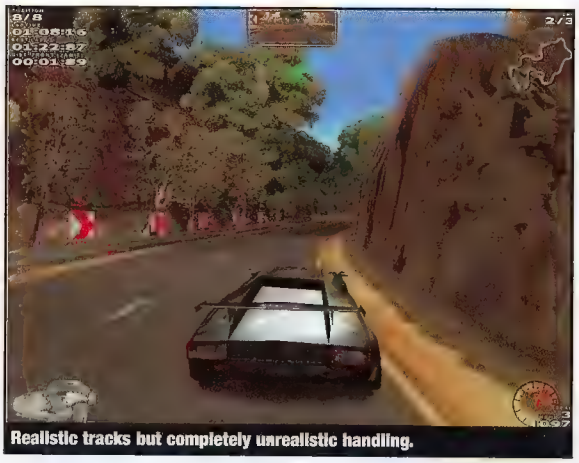
BREAKNECK

As racing games go, THQ's recently-released *Breakneck* features more than the average racer. Over 40 cars (including juggernauts, buses, go-karts and monster trucks!) and 24 courses combine to create an outstanding package. Arcade and Career modes, plus some great graphics are the icing on the cake.

SCORE	PCZ #78, 89%
DEVELOPER	Synetic
PUBLISHER	THQ
PRICE	£24.99

Made in Germany: but that's only one of its faults.

Check the bloody car – if we can't pull in this...



Realistic tracks but completely unrealistic handling.

CARMAGEDDON II

This infamous driving game caused outrage when first released last year. A hugely updated version of its notorious predecessor, *Carmageddon II* involves driving around a futuristic city, ploughing into people, and generally causing all kinds of automotive mayhem. Old, but still gold.

SCORE	*PCZ* #69, 95%
DEVELOPER	Stainless
PUBLISHER	GT
PRICE	£34.99

More of this please.

Steve Hill swerves off-course to take another dog out.

trees and over hills! I spent more time in the air than on the track.
Richie: When you play the monster trucks, you can't see the track ahead – they fill the screen.
Charlie: Only if you play with the camera view behind your car. You can play driving games much better if you go for the default in-car view.
Steve: Rubbish – it's better from behind.
Charlie: Piss off! Then why aren't driver's seats in cars elevated?
Steve: Why are hundreds of people maimed every day on the roads? Because they should be…
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: First-person view is better. There's a better sensation of speed, you can see where you're going…
Steve: But you can't see your car.
Charlie: You don't need to see your car. You mean you need to see the car to remind you that you're driving?
Steve: Yeah, otherwise it's just a tour of the track.
Richie: It's just *Quake* on speed.
Charlie: *(To Steve)* You're bloody weird, too. Jesus Christ.
Everyone knows that the only way to play games such as *Ridge Racer* and this is to go for the in-car view. "Oh dear, I can't see my car" – piss off!
Mallo: Play it as God intended: first-person, no dashboard. *Pour homme*, as we like to call it.

CARMAGEDDON II

Charlie: Okay, so the mark might have been a little high…
Everyone: *(Uproar)*
Steve: 95 per cent?! Jesus!
Richie: You said in your *Carmageddon II* review that your score for *Carmageddon* was too high!
Charlie: I look at *Carmageddon* as a "game as a toy". The fun thing about it is that there's this whole environment that you drive around in, and when I was playing it I couldn't stop. And you wanted to complete the races because you wanted to kill people in more complicated environments with different vehicles.
Mallo: I think it's still got a high level of fun in it.
Charlie: It's still a very, very, very good game.
Mallo: It looks a bit dated now. If anything, I think you should have been more harsh because of the game's unforgiving physics engine. It's very difficult to keep the car on the road sometimes.
Charlie: I suppose. But… if you play in the in-car view…
Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Richie: No – you play in the in-car view and 30 seconds later your bonnet comes up and you can see sod all.
Mallo: I don't play *Carmageddon II* in first-person mode.
Steve: You need to be able to see the damage.
Charlie: *Carmageddon II* is the gaming equivalent of *Tiswas*. It's childish, anarchic fun and there should be more games like it.
Mallo: It's due out on budget very soon.
Richie: Have you seen the Gameboy version?
Charlie: What?!
Richie: Top-down.
Charlie: Like *Grand Theft Auto*?
Steve: Christ! I've never seen the point of *Carmageddon*. It's controversy over content. "Ha ha ha! I'm killing someone!" – with your c**k in the other hand…
Mallo: You didn't think it was funny?
Steve: For about five seconds. What's funny about killing people?
Everyone: *(Uproar)*
Mallo: I've seen you playing *Half-Life* and laughing maniacally because you were shooting scientists in the face!
Steve: *Carmageddon II*'s saving grace was that you got to kill dogs, which I got immense pleasure out of. I avoid the people and go for the dogs.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: What have you got against dogs?
Steve: The neighbour's dog barks outside my window from 7.30 every morning. I broke today. I went up to the window and banged on it until it went away.

> **"Its saving grace was you got to kill dogs. I avoid the people and go for the dogs"**
> ***CARMAGEDDON II* BRINGS OUT THE ANIMAL LOVER IN STEVE HILL**

Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mark: I think the zombie version was more fun than the human version.
Mallo: Psychologically, the green blood makes a difference.
Mark: The environment is unrealistic, and having humans walking around it seems strange.
Charlie: You're weird! It's just childish schoolboy humour.
Mallo *(To Charlie)*: You called it "pornography for anarchists".
Charlie: That sounds a bit sinister now, doesn't it? It's like that scene in *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* where the knight gets his limbs chopped off.
Steve: Pythonesque.
Charlie: Yeah. I don't think there was anything wrong with it. It was all done in gleeful bad taste and it made me laugh. In fact, it made me laugh out loud many times.
Steve: On your own, in a dark room.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Charlie: No, we did play some multiplayer *Carmageddon II*. It wasn't perfect, though. I would like to see a meld between *Carmageddon II* and *Driver* – multiplayer, where you could play as the police or the bank robbers – and there were people being run over… Just because I think it's *irresponsible* to show people running out of the way.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Charlie: You want to see them die! Because that's realism.
Everyone: *(More laughter)*
Richie: Personally, I prefer the first one.
Charlie: What?!
Mallo: That's just like Paul Presley saying he'd rather play *C&C* than *Tib Sun*!
Richie: The pedestrians in *Carmageddon II* looked more unrealistic than in the first game.
Charlie: But that was part of the fun! I like that sort of thing!
Richie: There were very few polygons in each.
Charlie: One of the funniest things you can do in a comedy film is chuck a dummy out of a window.

ALSO-RANS

This little lot didn't quite make the shortlist

The *PC ZONE* team admit to having a bit of a soft spot for Kalisto's PowerVR showcase, *Ultimate Race Pro* – it captured our imagination for a number of weeks in the latter part of last year. That said, we felt that it hadn't stood the test of time as well as some of the other games here, so we decided not to include it. The same goes for Gremlin's blindly fast and slick-looking *Motorhead* – a game that blew us away a year ago, but which now languishes in gaming limbo due to progress. If you've got a low-specced PC, you could do a lot worse than check either of them out.

***Star Wars* fans should try *Episode One Racer* if they want to fulfill their fantasies, but they should not expect the be-all and end-all of racing games. Other also-rans include *Death Karz* (rated highly by Richie), *Micro Machines V3* (top-down, so it doesn't really qualify, but it is still an amazing game), and *Speed Busters* – a 'comedy', 'cartoony' game that will appeal to those of you who are 'zany', or French, or both.**

Motorhead. Look at me now. Motorhead. Alright.

DRIVER

Although *Driver* had a higher profile on PlayStation than it did on PC, it is not a game that should be dismissed without playing. You play the role of an undercover cop who becomes a sinister underworld 'getaway' driver in order to bring the bad guys to justice. With excellent Seventies music and cars.

SCORE	*PCZ* #82, 83%
DEVELOPER	Reflections
PUBLISHER	GT
PRICE	£34.99

Ram-raiding.

And we only nicked it yesterday.

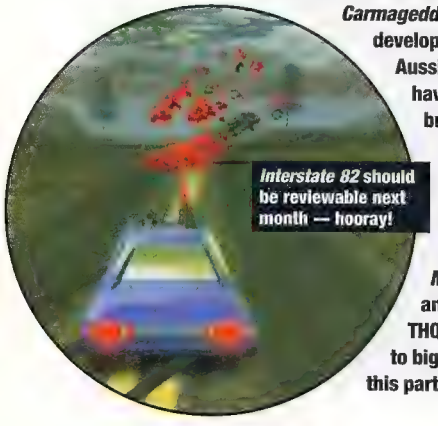
Mallo: And see the legs bend backwards?
Charlie: Yes! It bloody flails around like that! I find that hilariously funny. The Goodies used to do it all the time.
Mallo: What, and you think that kind of thing is echoed in the style of *Carmageddon II*?
Charlie: Yeah! But at the same time, the peds are realistic enough to make you think: "Hold on, maybe they shouldn't be doing that." Did you ever knock someone off a very tall building, then watch the replay?
Mallo: They jump off as well, don't they?
Charlie: Yeah, they jump off!
Richie: The replay feature in *Carmageddon II* is excellent. I'd play the game for 30 seconds, then watch the replay for an hour…
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Charlie: You're not supposed to play it like that, but you're having fun with it so it works as a toy. As I was saying earlier.
Mallo: I think *Carmageddon II* is worth buying on budget.

YET TO COME

Mirror… signal… manoeuvre… and race into the future with these forthcoming driving games

The most exciting prospect for driving game fans has to be the possibility of more add-ons for Microsoft's *Midtown Madness*. The possibilities are endless: they could release a steady flow of cities and new cars on the Internet (which we've heard they are considering doing for free…), or simply compile the best on to a low priced CD-ROM. Whatever Microsoft decide to do, they should not fail to accommodate the thousands of *MM* fanatics waiting for their favourite driving game to expand.

And let's not forget *Death Race 2000* – aka *Carmageddon III*. Okay, so it's being developed by a bunch of unknown Aussies and early screenshots have dented our enthusiasm, but we're really looking forward to more death on the roads and we doubt it will flop. There's also a *Rollcage* sequel on the way, *Interstate 82*, *Midnight GT* from Rage, and *Felony Pursuit* from THQ, so we can look forward to bigger and better things from this particular genre.


Interstate 82 should be reviewable next month — hooray!

Steve: What's the point in getting turned-on by seeing pretend blood in a pretend game?
Mallo: The blood doesn't bother me. It's more important to hear the thud of person on bonnet…
Mark: Well, you're sick, then.
Mallo: And then I want to hear them scream as they spin over the top.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Charlie: I take back everything I've said…
Steve: Is this therapy?
Mallo: These games *are* therapy. If you can laugh maniacally at virtual murder on-screen, then you can go home happy and with a clean mind. *Carmageddon* allows you to do things you can't do in the real world. Driving around London is immensely tedious… gimme *Midtown Madness* or *Carmageddon II* and the urge to kill kicks in.
Steve: *(Nervous laughter)*
Mallo: Then it just becomes a game of high comedy. It didn't warp my mind, it's just fun. I still play it.
Steve: It's too slow and the cars move like bricks.
Charlie: You're missing the point.

DRIVER

Mallo: It feels great. It was made by the same people who made *Destruction Derby*, so you'd expect that. And the single-player game is excellently plotted. That said, on the easiest level the cops are too tenacious – they ram you head-on as well.
Steve: Unrealistic!
Mark: It's not just that – they ram you head-on and that's it. Mission over – you've lost.
Mallo: You can take one big crash, head on…
Charlie: Imagine that – if there was a kamikaze police division!
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: On occasion, *Driver* does feel like you're playing the computer equivalent of *The World's Scariest Police Chases*. Did you see that TV programme? In *Midtown Madness*, you get into these high-speed motorway pursuits – weaving through vehicles with three police cars on your tail. It's just like on TV – really good. In *Driver*, you sometimes get two or three police cars chasing you, but the streets seem dull and empty – not as interesting as in *Midtown Madness*.
Charlie: Well, what do you expect from what is basically a PlayStation game?
Mallo: They should have done more for the PC.
Mark: That's always the problem, though. They're gonna sell lots more on PlayStation, so they're not gonna spend a lot more time working more into the PC version, are they?
Charlie: That's the sorry reality of the situation.

Mallo: I think the PC version *is* better than the PlayStation version. Playing on keys makes a difference.
Charlie: Why?
Mallo: Probably something to do with using your fingertips, rather than your thumbs. Having said that, it's much better to play with a good wheel. The Microsoft Force Feedback wheel, without the pedals, is excellent. The feel of it, when you sling these big, Cadillac-style cars – with their springy suspension – around the corners, is really smart.
Richie: I found the missions rather samey. You're either racing from A to B, or B to A.
Mallo: I thought they were really varied. You get intercept missions, pursuits, objectives that change… The only thing I didn't like about the single-player game was the first mission…
Mark: Yeah, it's ridiculous.
Mallo: You have to complete this outrageous stunt course before you can do anything.
Steve: But it gives you a chance to practise.
Mallo: It does, yeah. But it also forces you to get really, really good before the other missions open up. I'd have preferred to be broken in more gently.
Mark: It seems a strange thing to do with a console game – you're supposed to be able to just stick it in and play. This just stops you in your tracks.

> **"You're supposed to be able to stick it in and play. This stops you in your tracks"**
>
> **MARK "BENNY" HILL GIVES *DRIVE IN*'S STUNT COURSE A SEEING-TO**

Steve: I suppose you should be able to learn how to do all that stuff within the game.
Mallo: There is a video sequence that shows how to complete the course, and a ghost car to keep up with, but it still took me days to beat. In fact, I gave up a few times and almost didn't go back to it. Plus, right… *plus* – there are no parked cars in the video sequence, but there are in the game itself. It doesn't show you how to get around those!
Steve: Why did they do that –

just to put you off?
Mallo: I dunno. Probably to make sure you're good enough before you get given any of their drugs to deliver.
Steve: Yeah, but you've paid your money, you should be able to be as shit as you like.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Charlie: You can take a ride around the cities – the car's even got cruise control so you can stick to the in-game speed limits, for Christ's sake!
Mallo: Yeah, but you have to complete the single-player game to unlock all the available cities. They've even got Newcastle in there – the developers are based up there and decided to put it in as a cheat level. The only thing is: you're bombing over the Tyne Bridge and all of a sudden you hit a load of bollards and crash. The road just ends.
Charlie: Ooh – I hate that!
Mallo: That's what they're gonna do with *Midtown Madness,* I reckon.
Steve: What, just keep releasing cities?
Mallo: Yeah, like they do with *Flight Sim.*
Charlie: I can't wait for the Doncaster edition.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: In *Driver* and *Midtown Madness*, there's also a perverse pleasure to be had from driving around *properly.*
Richie: They pulled off that Sixties feel. The music is great, but it was all down to the cars – they were great.
Mallo: The music reminded me more of *Police Squad* than *Bullit.* They should have stuck a blue light at the bottom of the screen and had you race through women's showers… Too much bloody trumpet.
Charlie: *Driver*'s good fun, but it's too obviously a PlayStation game. And that really annoys me. It's like going to the cinema and watching *EastEnders* on the big screen.
Mallo: And no multiplayer.

MIDTOWN MADNESS

Richie: *Midtown Madness* multiplayer is superb.
Mallo: I think *Ultimate Race Pro* multiplayer is the best multiplayer driving game there's ever been. The deathmatch level – where you ram the shit out of each other and pull stunts on those bloody massive ramps – that was brilliant. We played it loads in the office. No one else has quite matched that. You can do that to some extent in *Midtown Madness*, but there isn't a game where the aim is to destroy your opponent's car by ramming it.
Richie: No, but they've added stuff to that. You take the gold to your hideout – that kind of thing. There's a cops and robbers game. You've got one bunch of people being robbers who've got to find the gold and take it to their hideout, and another lot being the police…
Mallo: Who have to ram them off the road.
Richie: Yeah. Unfortunately, there are no other cars in the multiplayer game – no pedestrian cars.
Charlie: Remember that EA game, *Redline*, where you could get out and run around shooting? Was it called *Redline*?
Mallo: For Christ's sake – you reviewed it!
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Charlie: Well, that was a good idea that didn't quite work. Someone will do it properly and produce something like a *Midtown Madness*-stroke-*Quake* game, where you can get out…
Richie: *Interstate 82*'s going to be like that.
Mallo: I'm not bothered about bloody going around shooting!
Steve: Look everyone: Mallo's not bothered about going around shooting.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: You'll be wanting to get out at a sodding petrol station next – to fill up!
Steve: Hails of bullets while you're putting the four star in!
Everyone: *(Riotous laughter)*
Mallo: No, but going back to what I was saying, *Midtown Madness* would be ten times better if it did have an *Ultimate Race Pro*-style deathmatch. That was the most fun we've ever had on four wheels.
Steve: *Midtown Madness* is great. It came from nowhere. When I first saw it in Seattle I was completely rude to the developers. I thought they had wasted my time. But I got the finished thing and thought it was bloody brilliant. It's the best racing game I've played in a long time. I played it solid for a week, which is six days longer than most games…
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Steve: It's as close as you get to *Police Camera Action* – the city is there, for real.
Charlie: It's a bit unforgiving.
Mallo: Bollocks – you can alter the realism and turn the physics down. Then you can pull some outrageous stunts.
Charlie: What, like just floating in the air?
Mallo: Not zero gravity, you idiot! It stops you spinning out as much.

Mark: It also ensures that you land on your wheels every time.
Richie: The computer-controlled cars work really well in *Midtown Madness.*
Mallo: The pedestrians are funny. They jump out of the way like Superman!
Steve: Driving around on your own, freestyle, can keep you occupied for hours. Just dicking around.
Mark: It's the best simulation of a city as well. There are just so many little things in it – like the time when I crashed through this window and found a hidden area to explore. There's another bit where you're chasing someone and suddenly you end up inside this huge baseball stadium. It's amazing.
Steve: If I ever go to Chicago there'll be bits I'll be looking out for.
Mallo: A mate of mine who knows Chicago saw it the other day and he said it was very realistic. He knew where he was and directed me around the place.
Charlie: When I started playing it I ignored the races completely and quickly thought: "Oh, it's not as big as I want it to be."
Steve: But it's Chicago!
Charlie: I wanted more! More cities – not just *one.* I did notice

> **"The multiplayer game is superb, but unfortunately there are no other cars – no pedestrian cars"**
> RICHIE ON *MIDTOWN MADNESS*

it said 'Chicago Edition' on the front of the box, so I presume that they're going to release more cities.
Steve: I can't wait.
Richie: They'll do San Francisco and London.
Mallo: London should be good. I hope they get it right and don't do a *GTA 1969* on it. What I like most about *Midtown Madness* is that you can whack the traffic up to full to make it feel more realistic. You come up to a junction and the lights are red, and all the other cars are starting to manoeuvre gently, when you blast in and try to skim through before the path is blocked.
Steve: Wrong way motorway chases are fun – against the on-coming traffic.
Mark: See how long you can avoid a head-on.
Mallo: The motorway chases are brilliant. If you honk your horn, the cars in front of you move out of the way! And the police don't often ram you head-on.
Steve: Yeah, the police are good. They sort of pull in front of you.

MIDTOWN MADNESS

Microsoft do to the driving game what they did to the flight sim: cross reality with fiction in an enjoyable and convincing manner. *Midtown Madness* sees you driving around Chicago in various mad races. Everything – from the environment modelling to the non-player car AI – is spot-on.

SCORE	PCZ #79, 90%
DEVELOPER	Angel Studios
PUBLISHER	Microsoft
PRICE	£34.99

And there was nothing the rozzers could do...

A scramble for the last parking space in Chicago. Yesterday.

Richie: The single-player game can actually get a bit tiring.
Mark: It is just racing, after all. I can't be bothered to race around a pre-set track. It's much better multiplayer.
Mallo: There are some great rewards for completing the single-player game. You do get some great comedy vehicles. Getting the bus is fun. They should have made a level where you have to keep it above 50 – just like in that film, *Speed*.
Steve: You can cause a huge pile-up, come back ten minutes later and they're still picking up the pieces.
Charlie: Of shattered lives.
Steve: Yeah, there should be people sobbing.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*

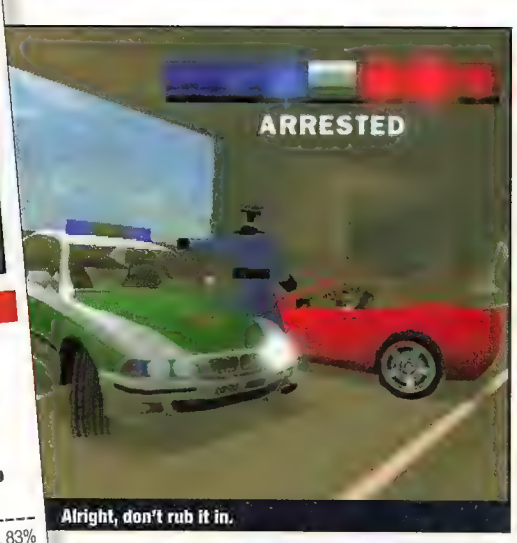
NEED FOR SPEED ROAD CHALLENGE

Mark: *Outrun* for the Nineties.
Steve: Media-friendly soundbite or what?
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: The in-car view, especially in widescreen, was weird. I just couldn't get on with it.
Charlie: The dashboard is a pain in the bloody arse.
Richie: I thought the in-car view was actually quite good.
Mallo: It looks good, but it's not that practical when you're actually playing.
Steve: Who wants a bloody dashboard obscuring the view?
Mark: Without it you just feel like you're flying.
Richie: Have you seen *Viper Racing*? You can turn off the bodywork so you can see the engine chugging away! And the suspension moves, which is quite cool.
Charlie: What's the point of that?!
Mallo: It's by car enthusiasts for car enthusiasts. The games in this Supertest are more arcadey than that – these are not driving sims.
Charlie: I'm sorry, right, but any driving enthusiast who wants to see the engine working when they're driving around is a complete tosspot!
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Steve: People wanking off about cars – they're no different from trainspotters!
Mallo: But that's the point of *Need For Speed* – all the cars are properly licensed. A lot of these games here have got pseudo versions of famous cars in them, but in *NFS* you get the real thing.
Richie: EA said they'd doubled the polygon count since *Hot Pursuit*, but when you look at the cars when they're damaged, they look like they're bloody inflatable.
Mallo: The road width varies, which is good, but the backgrounds are the usual clichéd bollocks, like Austria with its snow-capped mountains and Heidi walking over the hills going "hupla"… I liked the *Pursuit* game, though, where you have to outrun the police.
Steve: That copper, when he arrests you… You kill about four people and he gives you a first warning!
Mark: It's ridiculous!
Steve: I'm a danger to myself and other road users. He clearly should have locked me away.
Charlie: Stop me before I kill again!
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: *Road Challenge* looks great. There are a lot of licensed cars and a huge amount of options.
Charlie: If you care about the licensed cars, you're a twat.
Steve: Yep – an absolute twat.
Mallo ***(To Steve and Charlie)*****:** But neither of you can drive. A lot of people can, and they care about the cars in the game.
Charlie: Then they're absolute twats! And I've got no sympathy for them.
Mallo: Can you not see the appeal of driving the officially licensed version of a Lamborghini?
Charlie: Like playing a football game where you've got the real players? Is that what you're saying?
Mallo: In a nutshell – yes.
Charlie: Okay, right. But on the other hand, you're a twat because you're not driving the real car, are you? If the game's any good, you'll forget that the cars are officially licensed. As a game, *Road Challenge* is all right, but why did they blow all that money on the cars? Why not save that money and take five quid off the price of the game instead? And call the cars Bamerghini or something. Or Hurrahrri.
Mallo: They did that in *Breakneck*.
Charlie: So is that the only difference between *Need For Speed* and *Breakneck*?
Mallo: It's the difference between having Marc Overmars or Terry Overmars in your team.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: It sows the seeds of doubt in your mind before you've even started.
Steve: I wouldn't know a real car from a pretend one.
Charlie: They should let you enter the names yourself if it's that big a problem. Then you could call your car Mallo's Lamborghini.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Richie: EA always have these bloody awful interfaces. This game is no different – all this music going on and swirly patterns…
Mallo: But the music is great – there's some really good dance music in *Need For Speed*.
Steve: It's just some twat at home with his Bontempi.
Charlie: Yeah, and people are gonna be dancing to that in their houses, aren't they?
Mallo: Yeah – just like they did around *FIFA 99*. "I get knocked down, but I get up again…" But I'd much rather sit down and play *Road Challenge* than *Breakneck*.
Charlie: What have you got against *Breakneck*?

NEED FOR SPEED ROAD CHALLENGE

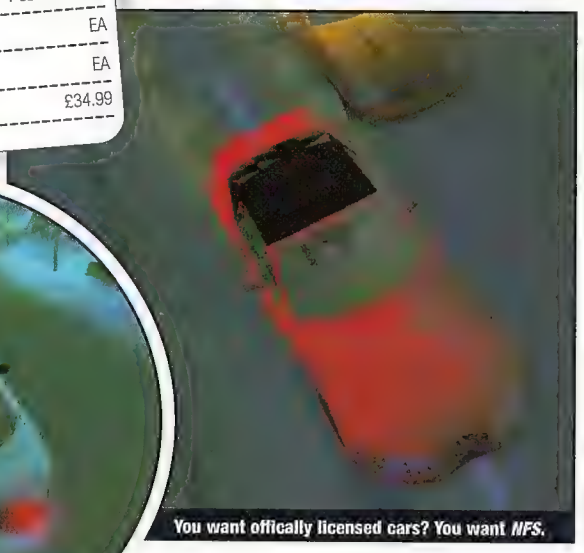
The latest in a long line of *Need For Speed* games, *Road Challenge* gives you the chance to out-run various law enforcement agencies in a number of highly realistic licensed cars. Whether it's a Jaguar XKR you're racing, or a Lamborghini Diablo SV, there's a huge thrill to be had from burning rubber with this.

SCORE	*PCZ*#74, 83%
DEVELOPER	EA
PUBLISHER	EA
PRICE	£34.99



Alright, don't rub it in.

Only self-confessed tossers have personalised plates.


You want offically licensed cars? You want *NFS*.

AVOID

These games broke down before they even got started. To the scrapheap…

There have been some really, really bad racing games that have graced our PCs in the past, and let's just say that we're glad to see the back of them.

Speedboat Attack **and** ***Wreckin' Crew*****, both from Telstar, were both prime examples of how *not* to make a driving game – even if one of them was set on water, rather than tarmac. And Maxis should be hung, drawn and quartered for the abomination that was *The Streets Of SimCity* – a game so bad that they refused to send us a review copy (it was in our 'Hall Of Shame' for ages). And finally, *Tank Racer*, from the now-defunct Grolier games division, should be avoided like the plague. All these games are a waste of time, effort and money. Don't buy them!**

The Streets of SimCity - utter toss.

And which way is the bloody right way?

ROLLCAGE

Racing down tunnels at very high speeds may not be everyone's cup of tea but, without a doubt, *Rollcage* is the kind of 'pure' race game that will cause you to marvel once mastered. It not only looks and sounds amazing, but also handles extremely well. The best futuristic racing game currently available.

SCORE	PCZ #75, 88%
DEVELOPER	Attention To Detail
PUBLISHER	Psygnosis
PRICE	£39.99

As the sun sets...

Steve: Stop it, Charlie, or he'll kill again!
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Richie: EA always put just enough in there so that people buy it, but in reality it's quite an empty game. The career mode was quite good, but there was just nothing in there that was spectacularly new enough from *Hot Pursuit*. Well, not enough to make me want to play it over and over again.
Mark: It's a good game, but not great.

ROLLCAGE

Richie: Futuristic racing games are shit, but *Rollcage* is the best of them.
Mallo: It's not too futuristic, though, is it?
Richie: The cars have got wheels – which is always a good thing.
Steve: They look like no cars *I've* ever seen.
Mallo: Well, they're buggies, aren't they?
Steve: Not even a buggy – more of a sled.
Mallo: No, there's proper contact with the ground – rubber on tarmac. I've never liked *WipEout*. Floating vehicles have got no place in racing games.
Steve: You can't get any purchase...
Charlie: *WipEout*'s all right – it's just for people on drugs, that's all.
Mallo: You play *Rollcage* and for the first few hours you're wildly spinning out all over the place. Eventually, when you get used to the controls and are able to hold the racing line you do begin to realise just how good a racing game it is. Over-steering is the problem – it's easy to over-compensate. Just nudging left and right is the answer.

Richie: The power-ups are decent enough. It's good the way you can have two power-ups at once.
Mallo: I turn the power-ups off.
Charlie: *(Laughs)*
Steve: Power-ups off!
Black-and-white graphics!
Charlie *(In a Northern accent)*: We're on our way to the factory!
Mallo: I find nothing more annoying in these games than when I'm driving around at

> **"I like the fact that it doesn't matter which way up you are"**
>
> ***ROLLCAGE* PROVES THAT THE ONLY WAY ISN'T UP FOR CHARLIE**

high speed and some tosser shoots me from behind with a bloody rocket! From first place to last place in one fell swoop – all because of a bloody stupid power-up. Turn them off and concentrate on the racing, I say. *Rollcage* has got a similar feel to *Ultimate Race Pro* and is quite easy to get into. The power-ups just muddy the waters.
Charlie: It's a PlayStation game again.
Mallo: No it's not – the PC version is much better than the PlayStation game. If I did have any criticism about *Rollcage*, it would be that it is too easy to complete. It only took me about three or four days of on-and-off play to finish it.
Richie: It's always this tiring process of "go through these five tracks and when you win, we'll open some more cars for you..." You'll never play it again once you've completed it.
Steve: It's a weekend wonder.
Mallo: A one-off wonder, if anything. It's not in the same league as *Midtown Madness*. *Rollcage*'s graphics are excellent, though.
Steve: Yeah, it does have its fair share of flashing lights, but they put you off.
Mallo: Buildings exploding around you and boulders falling into the road.
Steve (to Mallo): Oh, so you don't like power-ups, but you like exploding buildings?
Mallo: It's all about the feel of the game. *Rollcage* feels good to play and there are some interesting things going on around you while you race.
Mark: We should be measuring how much fun it is to drive and *Rollcage* is bloody good fun.
Mallo: It's fast and requires skill to complete.
Charlie: I like the fact that it doesn't matter which way up you are, because there's nothing more annoying than rolling the wrong way up in a car.
Steve: There's that auto-correct key that puts you the right way up. That was... *unfunny* the first time I saw it.
Mark: Did you see that *Thrust Twist & Turn* from Take 2?
Steve: What a pile of shit that was!
Richie: *Powerslide* was half decent. *Test Drive V* was awful.
Mallo: And what about *Tank Racer* from Grolier? That was a disgrace.
Steve: *Rollcage*, then?
Mallo: Good, but it would be better on budget.
Charlie: I'd pay 15 quid for a lot of games. I wouldn't spend 15 quid on this, though.
Mark: *Rollcage* isn't bad at all if you fancy a quick sesh.
Charlie: You what?!
Mark: You know what I mean.

AND THE WINNER IS...

By unanimous decision... *Midtown Madness*

It might be the most recent game out of all those featured in this Supertest, but the novelty of Microsoft's *Midtown Madness* has yet to wear off in the *PC ZONE* office. The combination of realistic cities, weather, non-player car AI and the sheer fun to be had just from simply toying with the game has yet to be bettered, and the unanimous decision here was that *Midtown Madness* was a clear winner.

"It's good, clean fun. Possibly too clean," said Charlie, summing up, with Steve Hill commenting that the game gave him "the gameplay he could enjoy at a price I could afford", although we think he was taking the rise when he said it.

Everyone else agreed – when it comes to mayhem on the roads, forget *Carmageddon II*, forget *Breakneck*, forget *Rollcage*, forget *Driver* and forget *Road Challenge* – *Midtown Madness* is the game you should play.

Behind you... *Midtown Madness* stays ahead of the competition.

PC ZONE

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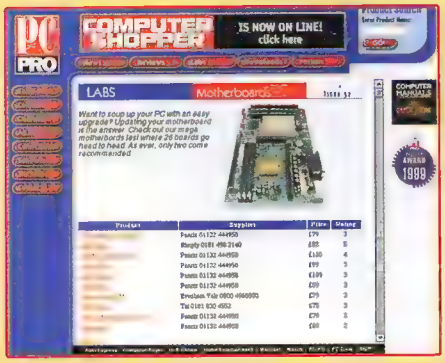
The Microsoft Intellimouse USB requires a USB port, Windows 98, a 3.5" disk drive and 12.2 MB of available hard -disk space. The FREE CD-ROMs require Windows 95 and most of the programs on these disks have limited functionality.

P001

PC PRO



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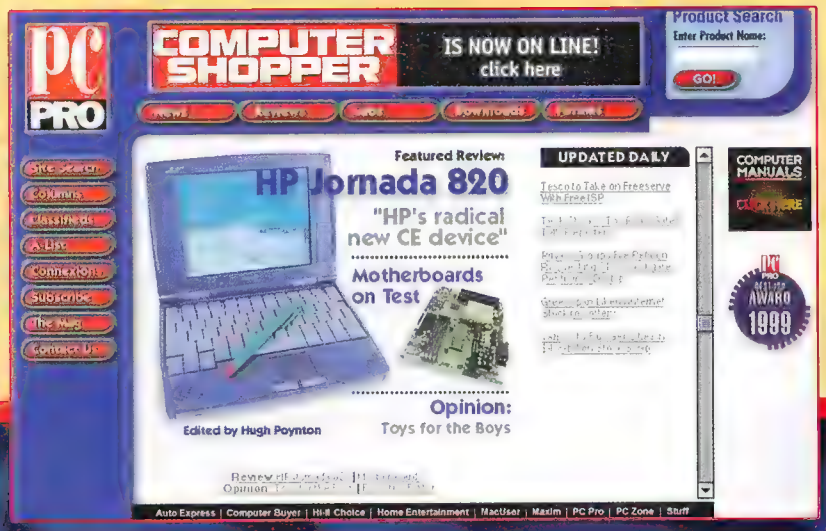

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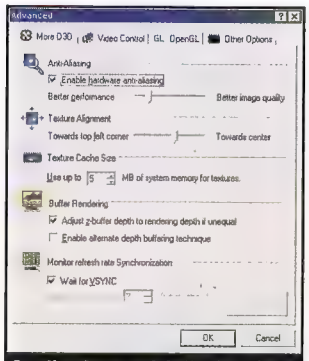
OVER 2000 SEARCHABLE REVIEWS

HARDWARE REVIEWS

The fastest, greatest chipset ever? *Andy Hutchinson* investigates two new GeForce based cards

ANNIHILATOR

£199 • Creative Labs • 01245 265 265 • www.creative.com



Creative do a much better job of driver integration – their Blaster Control enables you to fine tune every minuscule setting of the card.

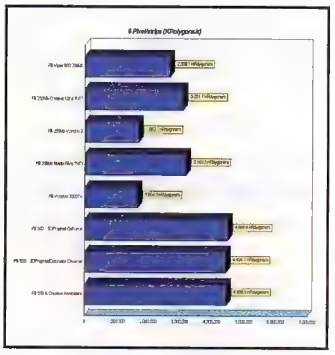
Creative's card uses exactly the same hardware configuration as the Guillemot. It uses the GeForce chipset with 32Mb of SDRAM, running at 120Mhz. We initially had problems installing the card thanks to the motherboard issue mentioned in the Prophet review, but after a BIOS patch, it installed correctly and ran without further incident.

Creative nearly always come up with the goods regarding their drivers and the Annihilator is no different. The reference drivers have been given a thorough overhaul and the handy Blaster Control interface used on the TNT2 cards makes a welcome return. This control panel enables you to change colour presets on the fly, for whichever API (Direct X, OpenGL, etc) you're going to be using.

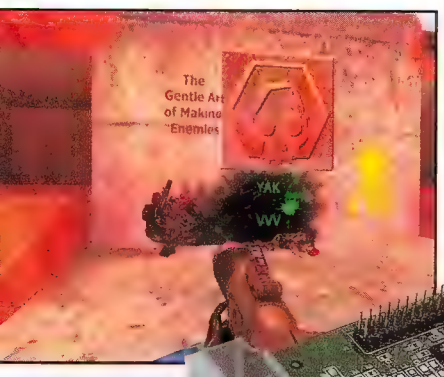
We ran the same benchmarks on this card and unsurprisingly, they were nearly identical. It scored a FutureMark rating of 4489 3DMarks and produced the same mixed bag of fill and filtering results. TreeMark rated the card at 42.1fps at 1024x768 – just ahead of the Prophet. In the *Quake III* frame rate test, using Demo1, the card was clocked at 47.8fps at 1024x768 – a nice score but it still falls short of the ideal 60fps.

The Annihilator comes bundled with a single game – Evolva Scout – a driver CD and a demo CD. Given the near identical scores and the identical list prices of the two cards – the one you pick comes down to whichever you can pick up cheapest on the high street. The Prophet does have a TV-out socket, so that might sway your choice, but if you want a massive speed improvement (and you already own something like a TNT2 Ultra or a Voodoo 3) you might want to wait until the next revision of the GeForce cards come out and/or some games appear on the market which make use of their incredible GPU facilities.

PCZ VERDICT 84% PC ZONE RECOMMENDED



The GeForce cards came in behind the Voodoo 3 series on many of the FutureMark tests, but a couple of them gave a real glimpse of the chipset's promise.



GeForce cards support OpenGL, which is perfect for games like *Team Fortress Classic*.

3D PROPHET

£199 • Guillemot • 0181 686 5600 • www.guillemot.com

Following on from the success of their excellent Xentor 32, TNT2 Ultra graphics card, good things are expected of Guillemot's first GeForce based product. Like all the GeForce cards that are on the market at the moment, this is a fairly basic bundle, offering little more than the card and some rather lacklustre DVD software.

We had problems with the installation of the Prophet, due to the strenuous demands the card places on an AGP slot. However, after a BIOS patch everything went much more smoothly and the drivers installed properly. The control panel offers considerable control over every facet of the card's design, from its Open GL settings to the clock frequency you run it at. This is a very overclockable card if you cool it well.

In our benchmarks the Prophet proved that the GeForce chipset is the best currently on the market, but that it still has some way to go before its full potential is shown. In a *Quake III* test at 1024,768 in 32-bit, the card clocked up 48.2fps on our test PIII 500. Using Nvidia's own TreeMark test (a very intensive workout), the card managed 41.6fps at 1024x768. It also scored a 3D Mark score of 4506 as compared to 4738 from a Voodoo 3500TV on the same system. We are told this last score might be inconclusive, however, due to some errant coding in the FutureMark program.

The Prophet's something of a mixed bag then – it's certainly a very powerful card – but strangely disappointing for all that. This is the first incarnation of the GeForce design and more powerful models with faster memory and a higher clock speed aren't far around the corner. You might also find your motherboard's not up to the job of running the card – hang onto that receipt.

PCZ VERDICT 85% PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Carlos Ruíz **gets his mitts on the new Microsoft mouse and SideWinder Game Pad**

MICROSOFT INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER

£39.99 • Microsoft • 0181 242 4100 • www.microsoft.com

Microsoft's IntelliMouse Explorer is designed to represent the next step in PC mice. The only problem is that the price tag would normally make most people stop dead in their tracks. Your existing solution is probably keeping you reasonably happy, so how does this rodent justify paying out the best part of £40?

The Explorer utilises revolutionary red-light-emitting 'IntelliEye' optical sensor technology. This allows the surface to be scanned at up to 1,500 times per second, thus making it considerably more accurate than a traditional, rubber-ball equivalent.

Consequently, the movement of the Explorer is extremely smooth and precise. It also means that you can chuck your mouse mat away, because it isn't fussy about the surfaces it can function on. And since there are no moving parts, it doesn't really need any intenal cleaning or maintenance. So far, so good.

The new shape is quite large and curvy – and significantly higher than most mice, making for a very comfortable experience as your whole hand can rest over it. And sorry, all you left-handers out there – but the Explorer is currently only available for right handed users.

The standard two buttons and a roller are still present, but are joined by an extra two buttons on the 'thumb side' of the mouse. These can be programmed with the supplied 'Intellipoint 3' software to perform numerous actions in Windows – but the real benefit, however, will be in forthcoming games that support them through DirectX 7.0 or above.

At the end of the day, the Intellimouse Explorer is a very satisfying mouse – comfortable to use, very stylish, and reliable enough to withstand any hectic gamer's lifestyle. Therefore, it comes highly recommended – but if you are a die-hard fan of Microsoft's classic mouse shape, bear in mind that the standard IntelliMouse is also now available with the same optical technology.

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER GAME PAD PRO

£29.99 • Microsoft • 0181 242 4100 • www.microsoft.com

Sporting a d-pad that allows for both digital 8-way movement and 3D proportional action, the SideWinder Game Pad Pro is a controller that will be useful over a much wider range of games. The silky smooth exterior exhibits the usual six buttons and two triggers, which have secondary functions when using the 'shift' button. And the many wonders of USB ensure not only painless installation, but also the easy connection of several pads for multiplayer gaming.

The Game Pad Pro performed admirably well with driving and flying simulators, using the analogue mode to good effect. Obviously, it's no real substitute for a steering wheel or joystick, but then it is a damn sight cheaper.

On the other hand, when using the digital mode for simple, action-orientated games such as *Expendable* and *FIFA 2000*, the fact that the d-pad still feels like an analogue device is a little off-putting.

We had expected the Game Pad Pro to build on the excellence of its predecessor, but the end result is a completely different product. The idea of the d-pad is very nice, but when you consider that people normally use gamepads for action and sports games, the original Game Pad does seem like a better bet.

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BUDGET ZONE

Hard up for cash as the day of festive decadence draws close? Desperate for some sort of cheap relief? Well, maybe you can find solace in this month's selection of budget buys...

MAKING LIKE A TURKEY Keith Pullin

ULTIMATE RACE PRO

£4.99 • Crucial Entertainment • Out now

Hey, no one told you it was time to stop for a picnic.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A 3D card adds to the atmosphere

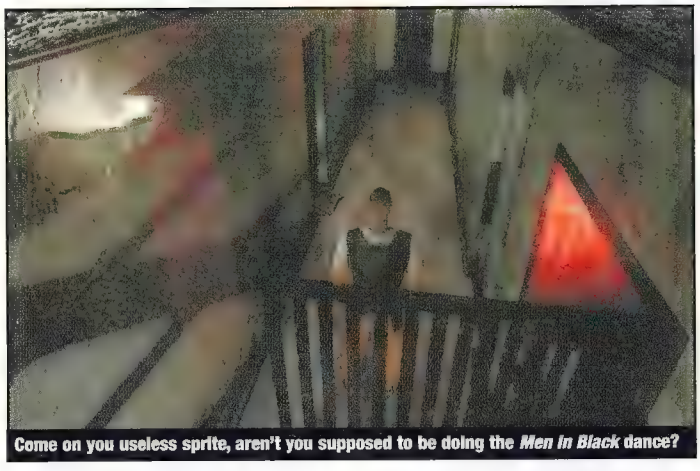
PCZONE RECOMMENDED

Ultim@te Race Pro remains remarkably fresh considering it's now almost two years old. The car handling is smooth and the trackside graphics still look spectacular. As for the car models themselves (with their polygonal wheels), well, they have seen better days.

There's not a lot in the way of adjustable roll bars, suspension, or choice of tyres, but the general variety of tracks (18 in total), plus single and multiplayer options (up to 16 people over the Internet) more than make up for deficiencies in the realism department. There are those who still rumble on about the lack of competitive edge on the computer-controlled cars, but if you can win a race during a rain-lashed storm on the hardest difficulty setting, you can certainly consider yourself fairly useful.

Ultim@te Race Pro doesn't have the stone cold realism of other racers but, at a mere £4.99, it's a damn good laugh nonetheless.

PCZ VERDICT 84%


Come on you useless sprite, aren't you supposed to be doing the *Men In Black* dance?

MEN IN BLACK

£12.99 • Infogrames/Best of • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P90 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A nifty CD drive helps loading times considerably

Men In Black can't quite work out whether it wants to be an action or adventure game. As per usual in such desperate circumstances, the game fails to have a decent stab at either. The adventure element stumbles from one contrived puzzle to the next, and most of the alien blasting involves hitting your keyboard in random fashion until whatever scum you're fighting dies. In complete contrast, the graphics are excellent, especially on some of the later more alien-like landscapes.

Fans of the film might want to check it out for aesthetic pleasure but, other than that, you'd be better off without.

PCZ VERDICT 51%

ARCHIPELAGOS 2000

£9.99 • Sold Out Extreme • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A 3D card adds to the atmosphere

PCZONE CLASSIC

When *Archipelagos* was first released a decade ago, it was met with a resounding "what the hell is going on?"

Surprisingly enough, with this 2000 remix nothing's changed. So, how do you describe it? Basically, it's a kind of 3D metaphysical romp across various infected islands, where you, cast in the role of a sort of entity, must stop the infection spreading further. It features eerie Triffid-like plants, rejuvenation rocks, and a load of other stuff that'll frankly just mess with your mind.

Ultimately, it's a curiously addictive real-time puzzler in the same mould as *Sentinel Returns*. In fact, *Archipelagos* is probably the only game that's ever attempted to copy said classic. Good job too, any more games like this and we'll all be eating our brains in frustration. But then, maybe that's not such a bad thing.

PCZ VERDICT 75%

Is is a triffid masquerading as a windmill or a giant watering can?

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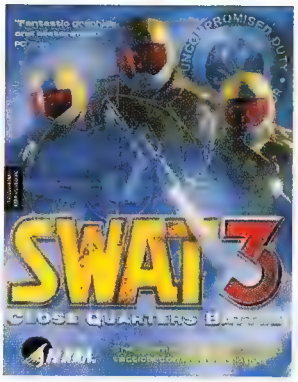

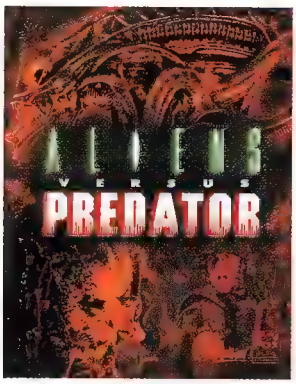

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COLONIZATION

£4.99 • Crucial Entertainment • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P90 **Memory** 8Mb RAM **WE SAY** You can probably get away with less

PCZONE RECOMMENDED

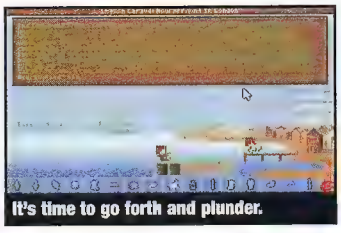
There's something deeply addictive about Sid Meier's classic exploration game. Every time you play it, you convince yourself that you'll just take a few screenshots, check that the old magic is still there, and then move on to something more visually stimulating. It never works out quite that way of course.

Within minutes you're feverishly checking out ancient burial sites, cursing the Dutch for their cunning choice of landfall sites, and consigning the devious Apache Indians to the native soil from whence they came.

Without doubt, *Colonization* is Sid Meier's finest hour. It may not have the graphical appeal of *Alpha Centauri* or other contemporary turn-based games, but it's certainly got more where it really counts – and that's in gameplay. If this classic strategy game still plays no part in your collection, we strongly advise you to get yourself a copy now. Absolutely superb.

PCZVERDICT **84%**

Bet you've never had such cool hair.



It's time to go forth and plunder.

Ah, just think of all the new pets you can have...

This is one of only three circuits – poor show, boys.

With no references to real drivers at all, it's hard to be the dastardly Schuey.

GRAND PRIX RACING 98

£4.99 • Pocket Price Games • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A steering wheel helps control your car a bit better

With only three circuits to choose from, no official sponsorship logos and absolutely no references to current Grand Prix drivers whatsoever, *Grand Prix Racing 98* has got to be one of the most shallow, boring and downright ill-conceived racing games to ever be made available on PC.

On the plus side though, the driving aids offer the beginner plenty of help, but for those who know what they're doing it's a different story: the peculiar handling characteristics and slightly suspect collision detection will eventually try your patience to the limit.

With *Grand Prix 2* already out on budget, and *Grand Prix 3* revving up for release, true GP fans would be best advised to stick with 'Steady' Geoff Crammond.

PCZVERDICT **53%**

SNOWBOARD RACER

£4.99 • Pocket Price Games • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Use a force feedback joystick for extra enjoyment

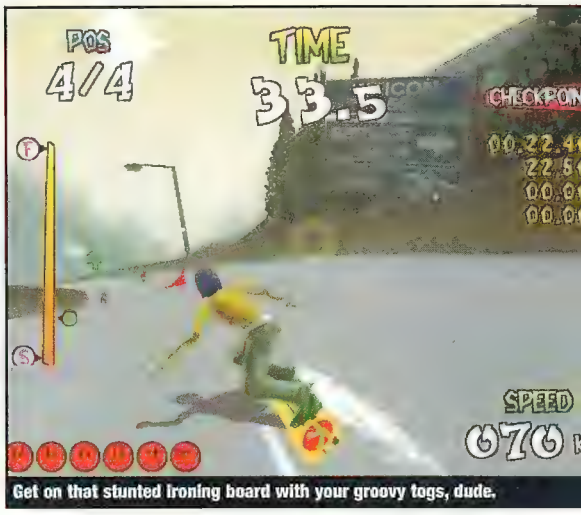
Real surf aficionados won't be shocked to hear that playing *Snowboard Racer* is a totally flat, emotionless experience, and nothing like the real thing. If, on the other hand, you've never tried hurling yourself down a mountain on a short ironing board, you stand a better chance of enjoying this snowboarding masquerade.

What we have here is basically a car racing game with altered graphics: snowy mountains replace greasy racing circuits and, instead of our usual dozen or so cars, we have four typically idiotic, fleece-wearing 'boarders.

The choice of events is equally as soul destroying. There are just three kinds of race: the big jump, a big hill with a few jumps, and a big hill with no jumps. Furthermore, because of the awkward control interface you can forget about having fun with spins, tricks and twists, unless you've got a decent six-button gamepad.

For a quick thrill you could do worse for a fiver. But if you're after a more realistic snowboarding experience, try digging your way out of an avalanche.

PCZVERDICT **48%**



Get on that stunted ironing board with your groovy togs, dude.

FEEDBACK

Keith Pullin **conveys more of your thoughts on the games frequenting the charts as the millennium approaches**

> **"*Homeworld* is potentially a great game, but what your review failed to comment on is that for a great many of us, it has technical problems"**
>
> **ERIC MALLEY, WITH A PROBLEM**

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in PC Zone over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO **Feedback, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ**

E-MAIL Alternatively, e-mail them to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **'Feedback'** in the subject line.

> **"I have patience and I have a brain, (which most of your reviewers seem to lack), and I found *Cutthroats* to be a joy to play"**
>
> **VERONICA SWELLS, SLASHES OUT AT OUR *CUTTHROATS* REVIEW**

***Age of Empires II*: can you see the improvements? We can.**

AGE OF EMPIRES II

REVIEWED Issue 84, January
SCORE 90%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"Without doubt it is still the best, and to miss it would be a crime for which you should be hung, drawn and quartered."**

What you think

✪ "At first this game appears to be a great sequel to an excellent game, but when you play it for a while you notice that it is almost exactly the same as the original. The units are practically the same, as are the buildings, and even the graphics to a certain extent. The most frustrating thing of all is that it's too hard. If you are looking for a good, original RTS game, go buy *Homeworld* instead – it's bloody fantastic."

Dan Culshaw

✪ "I absolutely live for this game! It beats the crap out of the original, and will be the most played online game of all time. The difficulty setting is perfect, and the amount of strategies you can employ is startling. Every unit's AI reacts the way it should do – and well, what else can I possibly say? Buy this game now – it's a well-deserved classic."

Luke Swan

✪ "Stone the elephants! I haven't had this much fun since, er *Age of Empires* actually. Somebody out there knows how to make a game. Take note Westwood!"

Atlantis

✪ "I'm finding it hard to differentiate between *AoE*, and AoE*II*. There's little to choose between them either graphically or logistically. The same argument applies to *Tiberian Sun* and its forefathers. Now, while football games like *FIFA* and *Actua* have survived on this formula for the last five years, applying the same half-arsed approach to games that supposedly promote original thought and innovation is clearly cheating the public. You condone that do you?"

James Parker

Comment

We certainly don't. Do you really think giving thousands of fans exactly what they want is cheating them? If more developers acted positively on what's been said about their games we'd see a lot more classics, that's for sure.

HOMEWORLD

REVIEWED Issue 82, November
SCORE 94%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"The real beauty is that Relic have not only managed to portray everything in stunning visual quality, but have also made a user interface that allows you the freedom to play out any military tactic you can think of."**

What you think

✪ "This is one of the best RTS games ever! However, there is a downside: it's also one of the most bugged. For example, I can't build any capitol ships when playing as Kushan. I know for a fact that other people have had similar (and different) problems. So, if your version is bug-free – you're very lucky."

Jon Herman, The Netherlands

✪ "Homeworld is potentially a great game, but what your review failed to comment on is that for a great many of us it has technical problems. Is Sierra going to sort this out? If *Quake II* can run okay with no problems in 3dfx OpenGL on my system, why can't *Homeworld*? For such a high profile game it's a big let down."

Eric Malley

✪ "*Homeworld* is a work of genius; real-time strategy at its very best. The graphics and sound are perfect and the gameplay is engrossing and balanced. The only disappointment is that single player campaigns are too short."

Defa, email

✪ "This game is hard. While even the most grizzled RTS veteran is still fiddling with his fighters, the computer is merrily co-ordinating huge strikes at various points all over the map. I found myself redoing levels in order to keep my numbers up and not face the next onslaught with a meagre, rather pathetic fleet. Unless I've missed it, a difficulty setting option would have been most handy."

Stuart

✪ "I'm gob smacked by the incredible detail and atmosphere, and more so at the speed (I was expecting slow down when lots of units were involved in a fight like *TA Kingdoms* for example). It also boasts the best tutorial that I have ever seen, as within the first 15 minutes all my questions had been answered.
"Homeworld fully deserves the 94% you gave it and maybe more as it introduces a new perspective and depth to the real-time strategy game."

Neil Gibson

Comment

Bugs? Yes, a few have come to light, however Sierra has informed us that patch v1.03 should sort out any problems in that department.

THE NOMAD SOUL

REVIEWED Issue 83, December
SCORE 87%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **"The *Nomad Soul* displays a psychotic level of ambition by also trying to be a *Virtua Fighter*-style combat game, a *Quake*-style shooter... and a 3D platform game."**

What you think

✪ "Here we bloody go again: wander around aimlessly listening to the inane banter of a bunch of repressed humanoids. Who gives a toss! You're right about the music though, it's Tin Machine all over again mate! Total shite!"

Beano

✪ "What a totally surreal and engrossing experience. This is one of the few games I've ever played where I actually feel as though I'm there. That's not just down to the graphics either. It's the subtle touches like being able to talk to anyone (almost) and looking out for traffic when you cross the road, not to mention watching David Bowie in concert.
"*The Nomad Soul* is highly original and lovingly executed – good work, weird French fellas!"

Sammy Croft

✪ "Ever get the feeling you've been conned? Your review led me to believe that *The Nomad Soul* is an original and intelligent piece of software, instead to my horror I now own the gaming equivalent of The Sport. I've nothing against sexual themes in a game, but this is just blatant sexual frustration on the programmer's part.
"It's a shame really – with a more mature approach (and half-decent music) this could have been a classic game."

Alan Cummings

Comment

Oh, lighten up Mr Cummings – you're taking it a bit seriously aren't you? Mr Bowie's made a few quick pennies, and as a nation we're all a bit closer to

The Nomad Soul: surreal and engrossing or the gaming world's equivalent of the Daily Sport? You decide.

understanding the notoriously bizarre French sense of humour. Most of us can live with that.

Overall, *The Nomad Soul* is a well-produced game deserving of praise. If you manage to progress further you may see what we mean.

SHADOW COMPANY: LEFT FOR DEAD

REVIEWED Issue 83, December
SCORE 77%

What we thought

"The best thing about *Shadow Company* is the atmosphere. With a half-decent 3D card the fogging and lighting effects are jaw-droppingly good."

What you think

✪ "Nowhere near as good as *Hidden & Dangerous*. If it had been a bit easier, it would have been a different story though."

Giles Wilton

✪ "Hey, what's this? A bug-free military combat simulation? Not on your life mate. The view from the vehicles is hideous, your soldiers' AI is schizophrenic to say the least, and the missions are too hard. Forget *Shadow Company* – go for the now patched and fully operational *Hidden & Dangerous*."

Comment

No arguments there.

CUTTHROATS

REVIEWED Issue 83, December
SCORE 68%

What we thought

"Your average PC gamer will undoubtedly lack the patience to get their money's worth out of Cutthroats."

What you think

✪ "Just because your concentration span has seen better days, you feel as though you can put every other 'average' PC owner in the same category. Well, I'm proud to say that I have patience, and I also have a brain (which most of your reviewers seem to lack), and I found *Cutthroats* to be a joy to play."

Veronica Sowells

Comment

Good we're glad you like it. Although your 'brain' comment seems a little misplaced, especially as it is you who's had to endure the shocking interface, and you who's now telling the entire nation how good the game is when clearly it isn't. Give us strength...

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

REVIEWED Issue 81, October
SCORE 90%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"The only way to truly experience the intensity of *Tiberian Sun* is obviously to play it."**

What you think

✪ "*Tiberian Sun* combines action and suspense along with a creeping sense of paranoia. The AI is superb – enemies stalk your base and use underhand tactics only a *Red Alert* veteran would consider. The voxels add a more lifelike look and the coloured lighting is a cool addition. "Who wants a 'spinny-rotatey' 3D engine needing a PIII 550MHz to work, when *TS* runs fine on a P166? The bottom line is that Westwood have created a masterpiece, and it's worth double 90%."

Dervish

✪ "*Tiberian Sun* is okay. Well, it was until I played as NOD. Their units are absolute crap. The GDI are acceptable but certainly nowhere near the kind of forces we were dealing with in *Red Alert*. Go back to the A-Bombs and MiGs and tanks – that's what real warfare is all about."

Matty-a

✪ "A great game. The graphics are nothing special but the gameplay kicks bottom. The movies are great, the AI is almost perfect and the units are superb. It deserves more than 90%, after all,it is the best RTS game ever."

Ger Corr

✪ "I would like to express my anger at *Tiberian Sun*. It is the biggest pile of tripe ever and Westwood should be sacked. The original was far better than this, and it was a bigger challenge. The new units are just the old ones in suits, and the tanks do as much damage as a rolling pin. Don't waste your money on this. Buy a decent game like *Aliens Vs Predator* or *Dungeon Keeper 2*."

David Twohig

Comment

Still the battle rages on. At the moment you're all split 50/50 on this one. Although there is one thing that trobles us Mr Dervish: how can we give anything double 90%?

KINGPIN

REVIEWED Issue 77, June
SCORE 92%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"If you've got a strong stomach and aren't offended by foul and abusive language, then *Kingpin* is a beautiful thing."**

What you think

"*Kingpin* is pure class. All those that say it's immature should have their heads blown off. It's the best RPG I've seen in a long time (except for *System Shock 2* of course)."

Nukey, email

Comment

Please astound us with more of your words of wisdom. We can't wait to hear your views on that seminal adventure game *Driver*, or the ageless beat 'em up *RollerCoaster Tycoon*. RPG indeed...

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER

REVIEWED Issue 82, November
SCORE 90%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"Some may berate the fact that there is only one ship to fly and no swooping over planets, but with the wealth of trading possibilities, such features are hardly missed."**

What you think

✪ "Well, it was a good game, but finishing it was a real anti-climax. What's the point of giving you extra strong shields and lasers when there's nothing left to use them on?"

Grimbo

Comment

Beats the hell out of us too.

MYST: MASTERPIECE EDITION

REVIEWED Issue 83, December
SCORE 34%

What we thought

"Only approach if you suffer from incurable nostalgia."

What you think

✪ "In the December edition you slag off *Myst: Masterpiece Edition* quite mercilessly. To describe the original game as 'drivel' is just not on. At the time *Myst* was ground-breaking stuff, absorbing, different and highly enjoyable."

Comment

Sorry to cause offence. You're right of course; it was considered pretty good back then. Thankfully we're all a little bit wiser and a lot more cynical nowadays.

X: Beyond the Frontier. Big, big shields and guns at the end with no one to use them on.

TROUBLESHOOTER

Can't get your head around that game you bought last week? Feel like throwing your PC out of the window? Or simply want to show your mates how absolutely skill you are at gamesplaying? If you're after help of this nature, you've come to the right section. So sit back, relax and let Cheatmaster do the walking...

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

120 CHEATMASTER
If at first you don't succeed... cheat. Allow Keith Pullin to show you how it's done.

121 DEAR KEITH
Agonising over how to get past certain levels? Can't sleep at night worrying about how to rescue Princess Tuftina? Then you need to call Uncle Keith.

122 HOMEWORLD
Stuck on this top sci-fi extravaganza and want to prove you're made of sterner stuff? Then let Mark Hill guide you through the space maze.

126 C&C: TIBERIAN SUN
Last month we gave you Part One of our guide to conquering the mammoth *Tiberian Sun*. Now feast your eyes on Part 2.

130 DEAR WANDY
Need a hand with a technical query that's bugging you? Our tech-head Wandy is here to help.

132 WATCHDOG
Getting your knickers in a twist over that bugged to jiggery PC game you bought last week? Sent a cheque to a company and received no product? Let the consumers' champion Adam Philips guide you through your legal rights...

YOUR HOSTS

Phil Wand

Keith Pullin

Adam Phillips

Mark Hill

CHEAT MASTER

Once again the Cheatmaster's 'in-tray' groans under the collective weight of a thousand cheats. Well almost...

CHEATMEISTER Keith Pullin

ON THE CD

More cheats, tips and solutions than ever on the cover CD this month. Find out what's in store for you by looking at the Editorial section of your CD-ROM browser.

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you ...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/CheatMaster, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **'Dear Keith'** or **'CheatMaster'** in the subject line.

GTA 2

Take 2 Interactive

Can't hack it as a crook? Then type "muchcash" on the player selection screen at the start of the game to get $500,000.

FREESPACE 2

Interplay

While flying through space, type "www.freespace2.com" and a 'cheat activated' message appears. Now hold the tilde (~) key and the following keys at the same time.

I	Invulnerability
K	Kill target
Shift and W	Infinite weapons for all ships
W	Infinite weapons for just your ship
G	All primary goals complete
Shift and G	All secondary goals complete
Alt and G	All bonus goals complete
Alt, Shift and K	10% damage to target
0	Flick through all primary weapons
9	Flick through all secondary weapons
Alt and K	10% damage to you
C	Send message to enemy
0	Toggle *Descent*-style physics
R	Rearm target
Shift and C	Toggle availability of countermeasures for all ships
Shift and I	Invulnerability for target
Shift and K	Destroy targeted subsystem

It's worth noting that you can't actually advance in the campaign if you use these cheat codes. However, there is one thing that may help you... Use the infinite weapons cheat in a single-player scenario, then exit the scenario and return to the campaign. You should now have an infinite number of missiles and possess the ability to advance through the campaign as usual.

TRICKSTYLE

Acclaim

Select 'cheats' from the option screen and slide in the following codes:

IWISH	Unlimited time
TEAROUND	Always win
CITYBEACONS	Win everything
TRAVOLTA	Power-up moves
INFLATEDEGO	Big head mode

AGE OF EMPIRES II

Microsoft

We printed a few codes last month to start you off, now we can bring you the rest of them. Just add the following codes as command-line parameters when you load the game...

Autompsave	Game saves every five minutes
Mfill	Fixes horizontal line display and black screen problems that occur with some video adapter configurations
Msync	Fixes a SoundBlaster AWE configuration problem
NoMusic	No music
NoSound	No sound (except cinematics)
NormalMouse	Standard mouse pointer
NoStartup	Skips all cinematic sequences when game starts up
NoTerrainSound	No terrain sounds
800	Sets screen resolution to 800x600
1024	Sets screen resolution to 1024x768
1280	Sets screen resolution to 1280x1024

If none of that appeals to you, try pressing these keys during the game:

Ctrl and P	Build immutable structure
Ctrl and T	Alternate resource menu
Ctrl and Q	Instant build
Ctrl and C	View end-game sequence

PANZER GENERAL 3D

SSI

This hex-based war 'em up has been given a new lease of life with its recent 3D facelift. In honour of this auspicious event we offer you the following cheats...

In the Panzer.INI file, add "TestCheat = TRUE" to the [SIM] section. Now then, during the game press the following keys:

Ctrl, Shift and F12	Win scenario
Ctrl and F12	Win scenario with minor victory
Ctrl, Shift and Del	Cause selected target to instantly explode
F12	Lose scenario
Ctrl, Shift and End	Your vehicle self-destructs

MADDEN NFL 2000

EA Sports

Like ramming your helmet between men's buttocks? You'll

appreciate this then. Play around with these codes after completing the Madden Challenge…

firstis20	20 yard first downs
painful	Increased injuries
nopicks	No interceptions
qbintheclub	Perfect passes
quarkandstar	Big versus small players
itsinthegame	EA stadium
wildwest	Dodge City stadium
cowboys	Marshalls fantasy team
mojo	All 60s team
sideburns	All 70s team
KillerJoke	Clown team
Phalanx	Centurian team
Snaptaclepnt	Sugar Buzz team
XmasGift	XMax Rush stadium
BtheBall	Ball cam
Refisblind	Blind Ref
Inthefuture	Industrials team
Airmadden	Super jump
Teammadden	All Madden team
Weputithere	Tiburon stadium
Maganasave	Hands of glue

MIGHT & MAGIC VII

Ubi Soft

After killing one of the major monsters (like a dragon) cast 'paralyze' on the dead body to bring it back to life, and then kill it again. This gives you more experience and you can repeat it as many times as you like.

NOCTURNE

Take 2 Interactive

There's only one cheat available for this at the moment. Still, if it's God mode you want – you got it. Just type 'Godgames' during the game.

REVENANT

Eidos Interactive

Press Enter during the game, then type any of this lot… There are more but we haven't worked out what they do yet – sorry.

Alreadydead	Restore full health
Potionsnlotions	Receive loads of potions
Alchemy	Infinite gold
Nahkranoth	Kill monster with one hit

SEVEN KINGDOMS 2

Ubi Soft

Type "!!##%%&&" during the game to enable the cheat mode. A message should come up saying, 'Cheat codes enabled'. When that appears, just press the following keys…

Ctrl and M	Reveal Map
Ctrl and T	Know All Technology
Ctrl and U	Toggle Mortal/ Immortal King Mode
Ctrl and Z	Fast Build Mode
**Ctrl and **	+1000 Food
Ctrl and C	+1000 Treasure
Ctrl and ;	+10 Population in Selected Town
Ctrl and +	Seat of Power Full
Ctrl, Alt and E	-10 Reputation
Ctrl, Alt and R	+10 Reputation
Ctrl, Alt and K	-20 Damage to Selected Building
Ctrl, Alt and J	+20 Damage to Selected Building
Ctrl, Alt and X	-1000 Treasure
Ctrl, Alt and C	-1000 Food
Ctrl and D	Toggle AI Info
Ctrl and A	Toggle Debug Messages

DELTA FORCE 2

NovaLogic

Hit the '`' button (the ~~backtick~~ key) on your keyboard to bring up the console and type in the following codes:

thetrooper	God Mode
sunandsteel	Reload ammo
diewithyourbootson	Unlimited ammo
stilllife	Invisibility
revelations	8 artillery shots

Type "you've got problems" and then if you switch to third-person, you may get a surprise.

CALL OUR TIPS LINE
0207 917 7698
THURS 1.30PM–5.30PM

Neil Valentine here will answer any question you have. Possibly…
Email us for a quick response: Tipszone@hotmail.com

DEAR KEITH

***Keith Pullin*'s back to solve more of your gaming conundrums. So wipe away those tears, let's face your fears…**

NO STAYING POWER

Q I am trying to get somewhere in *Darkstone*, but I'm having no luck whatsoever. I know that when I kill, I earn experience and the game revolves around that thesis, the trouble is I can't kill anyone. Don't get me wrong – I'm not afraid, it's just that one just doesn't possess the required skill. Help me, won't you?

Henrietta Forkham, Sunningdale

A **One can attempt this: go to Jong (the trainer) and type 'Nahkranoth' (allows you to kill most enemies with one strike). Now hit him and you suddenly gain loads of experience. Keep fighting and gaining experience, but stop when Jong starts to disappear. End the sparring session, go back inside and then come out again. Jong is healthy again. Have another fight and repeat the whole process until one has the skills required to progress further in the game.**

SAFE AS HOUSES

Q Like most people I have *C&C: Tiberian Sun*. I quite like it but I'm starting to get annoyed by the huge missiles that wipe out my structures, especially my construction yards. Is there any way to avoid this needless bloodshed?

Ryan Knowles, Udderidge

A **Well, it's not exactly needless, it's part of the game. There is however a way to minimise the damage. When one of your buildings becomes targeted, quickly save the game. Check to see which one is about to become dust and then sell it. The missile should hit nothing at all and you can proceed to build a replacement.**

CALM DOWN

Q *Caesar III* is a great game, but I never have enough money, nobody wants to live in my city, and everybody who does hates me. I can't take it anymore. I'm in a bit of a state and was hoping you knew a way to lighten up my miserable life.

Wendy Wright, Liverpool

A **All right, calm down. The easy way to get round this problem is to cheat. Access your *Caesar III* directory and edit the 'C3_model.txt' file. This lets you change everything from the cost of a building to how much money you have in the bank. A few tweaks here and there, and citizens will be lining up to live in your empire.**

A GRAND PROBLEM

Q I'm having a bit of a nightmare with *Zork Grand Inquisitor*. My problem is bringing the two halves of the SNAVIG scroll together in the Dungeon Master's house. I'm at a total loss, and would be most grateful if you could help me.

S R Simmons, Benfleet

A **When you have both parts of the scroll, enter the mirror and assemble them inside to get the SNAVIG spell. It really is that simple.**

WET GOD BOD

Q I have quite an old game called the *Journeyman Project 2 – Buried In Time*. I've got all the evidence from the Di'Vinci Studios, Dr Farnstein's Lab and Chateau Gaillard, but I need two more pieces of evidence from Chichen Itza. To get this evidence I have to give a gift to the God of Rain, but I have no idea what that could be. Please help me!

Lee Brown, Stockport

A **I'm disappointed. What do you reckon a Rain God would be interested in? Fire? No, of course not. You need to give it plain, simple H20. Just put some water in the niche and you'll be able to get onto the next bit of the game.**

GEORDIE PRINCE

Q Please can you help me? I keep getting killed every time I reach the flame in *Prince Of Persia 2*. Some time ago I sent you a letter asking if you could help me with this problem, but I have had no reply. Is it so difficult it has even you baffled?

Peter Shand, Newcastle upon Tyne

A **No way, mate. When you reach the flame you are attacked by the Birdman. Don't panic, let him kill you, then, when a message appears saying "push space bar to continue…", don't. Just keep waiting and prepare yourself for a very pleasant surprise.**

A VERY SPECIAL GUEST

Q I'm playing *The 7th Guest*, but it's pretty boring actually. I was wondering whether you know of any nifty little cheats that can get me through the whole thing quickly, so I can show my brother who'll then think I'm a genius.

Nick Worsley, Sidmouth

A **You're a bit of a sad one really, aren't you Nick? Well, if you type "zaphod beeblebrox" at the main menu, all the rooms become unlocked. This doesn't solve all the puzzles for you mind, so your brother's going to need a fair bit of convincing yet.**

BALL CONTROL

Q I've got *Android Pinball* and a good friend of mine told me there was a way of controlling the ball with the cursor keys. Is this true? If so – how do you do it?

Phil Webber, Milton

A **Press escape during the game and you're asked if you wish to exit. Press 'j' to be returned to the game. However, there is a difference – you can now use the cursor keys to control the ball. Enjoy.**

MERE MORTAL

Q I've just bought a game called *Mortal Kombat 3* and have asked a lot of people for cheats, but they all seem to have no idea what I'm talking about. I would be very glad if you gave me some.

Chucks Onyekwelu, Selsdon

A **It's not the sort of thing most people know about really, but I'll gladly help. At the start of the game type 'mk31995' to become invisible, 'mk3 8000' for turbo mode, or 'mk3 0666' for full weapons. Have fun.** PCZ

HOMEW

***Mark Hill*, star gazer and Patrick Moore devotee, brings you his painstakingly researched hints and tips to ensure you know just how to navigate your way through Sierra's superb space extravaganza**

REVIEWED *PCZ* #82 **SCORE** 94

Commanding a space fleet isn't the easiest of tasks. Specially if it's in full 'oh it makes my brain hurt' 3D. Now all you have to do is read our area by area guide. And take a couple of paracetamol.

WASTELAND

The first thing to do is to start harvesting resources before you even think of sending out probes. Build your fleet up and prepare for battle, making sure to set the formations. When the enemy arrives, it will start attacking your resource collectors, so get them out of the way. Attack the fighters with corvettes and use fighters to do battle with the frigates. Have your salvage corvettes ready to get hold of fallen enemy vessels, especially the lone frigates before the second wave begins. As soon as it arrives, hide the SVs in the dust clouds or they'll get blown to smithereens. While you're there, grab the enemy's collectors.

DIAMOND SHOALS

Take as many asteroids out as you can with the smaller attack ships (frigates are more likely to crash into them). Put the repair ships behind the Mothership and set them to repair it as it sustains damage. You'll receive reports of the lack of resources in the area, but set your harvesters to collect anyway. How you use the camera is very important here, you need to be able to see the asteroids as they come rushing towards your ships. The best ships to build at this time are corvettes and strike craft, so don't go wasting RUs on destroyers.

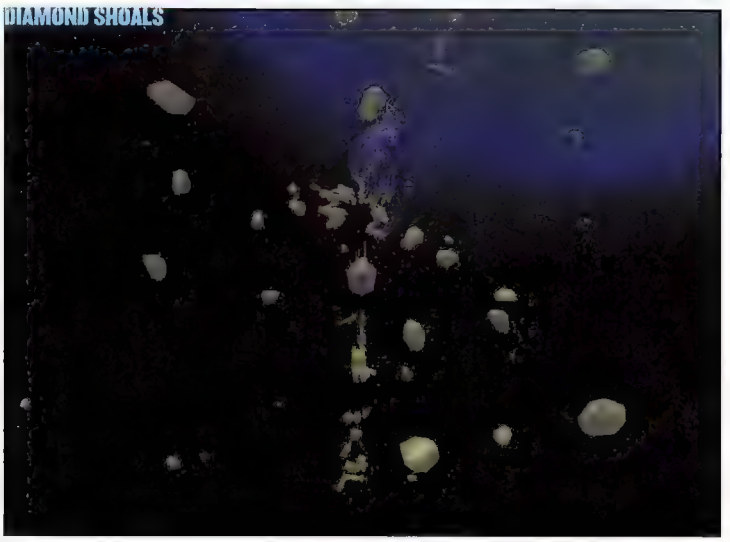
GARDENS OF KADESH

Despite its name, there is very little in the way of shrubbery, flower beds and insects here. It is bloody space, you know. Get ready for the enemy's oncoming fleet which arrives as soon as you get your resource collecting in motion. Take the fuel pods so the small enemy fighters can't refuel. When they run out they'll be left stranded and you can wipe

The millennium celebrations have already started in space.

Fast ships: like bats out of hell, like shit off a shovel, etc...

GREAT WASTELAND



DIAMOND SHOALS

ORLD

STRATEGY GUIDE

Get those fuel pods and stop the suckers from topping up.

SINGLE-PLAYER TIPS

Develop your strategies with these handy hints

- Don't always follow Fleet Command orders, and think carefully before you do anything they say. Sometimes they'll push you straight into unnecessary trouble or make you miss important events. For example, in mission six you're told to clear an asteroid field using capital ships which have very low manoeuvrability and usually end up crashing. Smaller ships are preferable. In the second mission, don't send the probe as instructed, or you'll end up being attacked.
- Build at least one Resource Controller for every two collectors and use them to protect the collectors when you send them out to harvest. As with researching, start collecting resources as soon as you can.
- Don't waste resources building extra research ships, one ship is sufficient. Having more will speed up the process slightly, but not enough to justify an expenditure that could have been used for greater effect elsewhere.
- When plotting your research tree, pick paths that force the enemy to use counter measures to defend themselves.
- One of the best and cheapest ways to build up your fleet is to use salvage corvettes. Use them to capture enemy ships whenever you can, but be prepared to defend them as they have no capabilities to do so themselves.
- Defender ships are not only good for the obvious, they can also be used for attack. Set their tactics to aggressive and put them in large groups.
- When entering enemy territory, go for the harvester ships first. They're usually out of the protection belt and it will take some time for battleships to arrive. By which time you could have decimated their resources and weakened them.
- Gravity well generators can have a massive impact on the game if used properly. They can freeze any ship that is fuel-powered, making them easy targets for frigates and other capital ships. To make them even more effective, group gravity well generators with cloak generators, making them invisible to the enemy.
- Check often for new technologies. You never know when something really useful might become available.
- Whenever you think more information on your opponent might give you an advantage, send out probes. Early missions prompt you to send them, but it's up to you to do it later on. Remember that they get left behind after each mission though, so don't use them unnecessarily.
- Use strike ships against frigates, frigates against corvette-class ships and corvettes against strike ships.
- Use wall formations for large ships and claw and X formations for strike craft.
- Always keep an eye out for fuel levels on strike ships. If fuel runs out in the heat of a long battle, your ships will be extremely vulnerable.
- You won't get anywhere unless you employ support and repair frigates to fix damaged ships.

let the games begin

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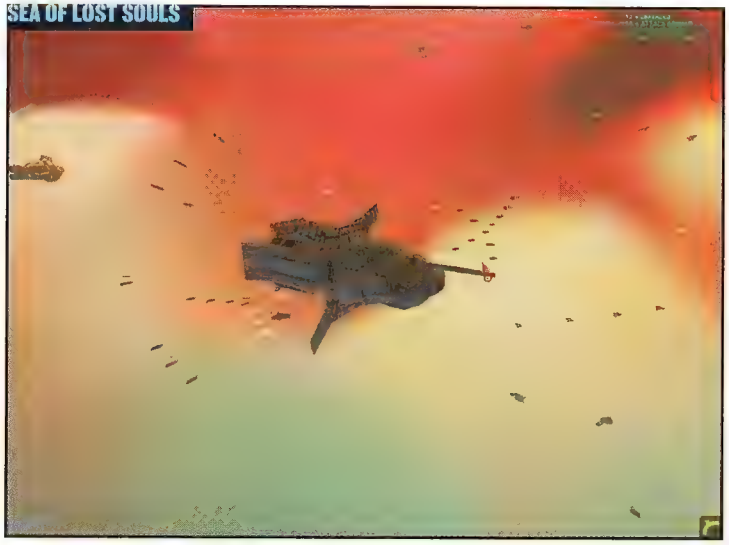
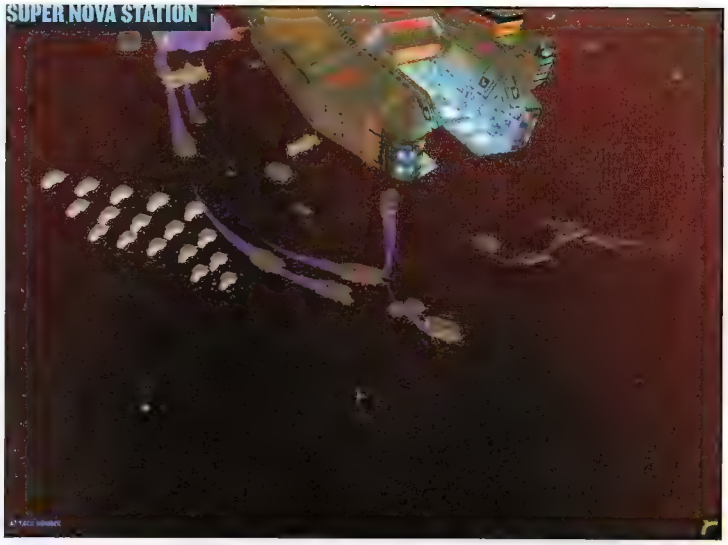




them all out with corvettes. Use your own fighters on the larger vessels. Don't use the hyperdrive as soon as it becomes available, there's plenty of resource gathering to be done here. While your harvesters are out collecting, keep building up your fleet in preparation for the next scenario.

SEA OF LOST SOULS

Send defenders, corvettes and interceptors to investigate the ghost ship. If you use capital ships they'll be sent against you, while attack bombers won't stand a chance against the missile destroyers. Concentrate on the main ghost ship and milk the surroundings for resources. Although, considering this is a sea, maybe you should fish for resources. Oh, forget it.

SUPER NOVA STATION

Get your resources from two regions in the veins of the space dust that are safe, otherwise the radiation in this level will destroy your collectors. Find your way to the enemy ships through the space dust veins and keep some capital ships up front to absorb damage from the mines. If you have a carrier, fill it with repair corvettes. You can undock them every time you need to fix damaged ships. Interceptors and scouts will be destroyed by the radiation, so leave them behind. For once, Fleet Command doesn't have its head up its own arse and gives you valuable information. Go along the path they give you to the station and you won't alert the enemy fleet. Nothing will happen until you bring your ships within range of the station, when you'll have to stop an enemy carrier from leaving. Use a probe to induce the carrier's attempt at escape instead of your own ships, that way you'll avoid getting caught in the radiation. Move to the safe area and destroy the rest of the enemy fleet from there. Then mine the level for resources before moving on.

TENHAUSER GATE

The Bentusi need your help, but that doesn't mean you need to sacrifice yourself. The enemy fleet is made up almost entirely of capital ships, so use strike craft and try to capture a couple with salvage corvettes. As usual, plunder the area for resources. It's a good idea to keep your fleet inside the carriers and Mothership in preparation for the next level and you should also build some proximity sensors.

GALACTIC CORE

Get after those gravity wells straight away and be careful to defend your frigates and capital ships from them. Once you've got rid of them and the first wave of attackers, launch your strikers and position some proximity sensors next to your capital ships. The sensors will allow you to detect and attack enemy cloaked units, a trick they are increasingly likely to pull.

You can leave the rebel destroyer *Kapella* to its own devices until it reaches your Mothership. Once there kill off all its pursuers.

THE KAROS GRAVEYARD

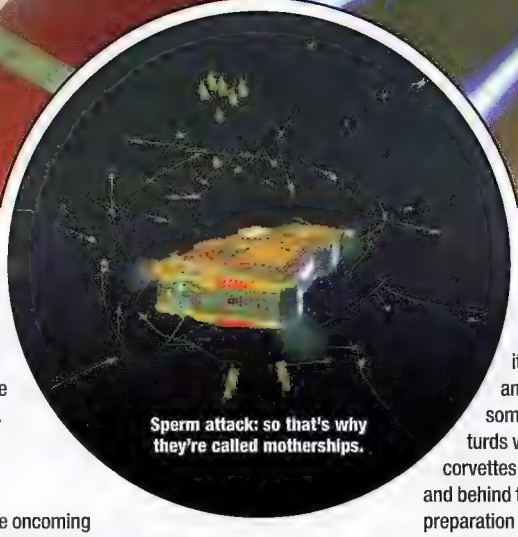
Send your strike craft below the main section of dust and space and position them directly under the rebel ship. By hitting the autoguns surrounding this ship you can finish the level off pretty quickly. There is another way of completing the level, which nets you a large quantity of RUs but takes an age. This consists of taking your ships through the space veins to clear out the autoguns. On the plus side, you can collect lots of resources. On the minus, junkyard salvagers will keep stealing your ships and you'll spend a long time getting them back. The choice is yours.

MULTIPLAYER TIPS

Many of the single-player strategies will prove useful when battling it out against other players

- **Keep large fleets cloaked by cloak generators around your Mothership. The Mothership will still be visible and enemies will be lured in, thinking they've got an easy kill on their hands. As soon as they get in close, uncloak your fleet and give them the scare of their lives.**
- **Strike craft have two major advantages over Capital ships: speed and manoeuvrability. Keep your formations manageable to take advantage of this. Large formations take longer to manoeuvre.**
- **The combination of a gravity well generator and a missile destroyer makes an excellent defence against enemy strikecraft. Immobilise your targets and pick them off like the sitting ducks they are.**
- **In games with Hyperspace on, start building a gravity well generator but pause it when there's about one RU left before it's completed. Your enemies, if they're smart enough, will send a probe to check whether you have a gravity well generator before entering Hyperspace, but they'll be fooled into thinking it's safe to attack. Once they start to arrive, complete the generators and give them a nasty surprise.**
- **Sometimes it's a good idea to build a large strike force straight away and wipe out a nearby enemy before they have a chance to react. Get rid of their harvesters and research vessels early into the game and they'll be at a serious disadvantage. Be careful you don't leave the way wide open for a third party though.**
- **Use your scouts as a smart bomb. Get them to attack a target, then scuttle them just as they reach it. This is most effective against other scouts. If you do it right you can take out two enemy scouts for every one of yours.**
- **It's also a good idea to scuttle your probes when you find an enemy carrier.**
- **If you're building frigates from a carrier, they won't actually appear until you stop. You can use this to your advantage by making a whole fleet of frigates wait inside your carrier and stopping it when you're about to be attacked.**

Make sure you repair any damaged ships as soon as possible or you won't last very long.


Sperm attack: so that's why they're called motherships.

Just make sure you have enough RUs to build cloaked fighters, cloak generators and salvage corvettes for the next level.

BRIDGE OF SIGHS

Nicking is the business, and business is good. Your main priority on this level is to capture as many enemy ships as possible. To this end, use a cloaked fighter to lure away some of the ships surrounding the station and cloaked salvage corvettes to capture the elite frigates. Get as many as you can using this tactic and get ready for an assault on the space station. This time, cloak your capital ships and frigates, which will allow you to get into the very centre of the station where you can cause some serious damage. Once the station has been destroyed, get out of this region before more waves come your way.

CHAPEL PERILOUS

You need to destroy the oncoming asteroid before it hits the Mothership. Use frigates and capital ships as they're the most powerful. Keep them moving around the asteroid as you blast it repeatedly. Once it goes out of range, go for the enemy ships. Set up a line of mines in front of the Mothership to protect it using the minelayer corvettes. You'll have to protect the minelayers from enemy ships as they go about their slow and arduous task. Escort them with cloaked fighters and interceptors while laying into the asteroid with attack bombers.

After you've hyperspaced, you're in for a real mother of a battle, but remember you're just one step away from home.

HIIGARA

You wouldn't expect the last level to be easy, would you? And it isn't. Don't waste any time before laying some explosive space turds with your minelayer corvettes in front of your fleet and behind the Mothership in preparation for the first wave. The enemies will come from above and behind, so place the mines in that area. When the opposition arrives, throw everything you've got at them. You don't want even one ship floating around idle. This is war, man. Send resource collectors to the safe dust cloud and get ready for the next wave. You should have repair vessels on hand to fix the Mothership as she starts to fall apart. When you see what's coming, you may fall apart yourself. As soon as the rebels arrive, assign them to groups and get cracking on those enemy ships. Once that's over with, you'll spot the enemy Mothership in the distance, and she ain't feeling maternal. Get as many resources as you can and build up your fleet before going in all guns blazing. Take out the proximity drones with cloaked fighters. Put all your strike craft on the carriers and send them through the gap you've just created to destroy the Mothership. Then sit back, relax and quietly celebrate this galactic matricide. You've finally made it home. PCZ

Forget the pretty colours, keep your mind on the job.

Get your formations sorted. Now!

Look at 'em, merrily flying to their death. Bless.

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COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

STRATEGY GUIDE–PART 2

Resident freedom fighter Keith Pullin whisks us through the final instalment of the *Tiberian Sun* strategy guide

REVIEWED *PCZ*#81 **SCORE** 90%

From now on you need quick thinking, lightning fast reflexes and the tactical know-how of Napoleon and the legendary stamina of Josephine. The remaining part of our guide directs you through your mission objectives, but does not go into specifics for each battle, seeing as the same strategy can often be repeated. Got that soldier? Good. Let's hit the battlefield...

GDI – PART 2

7 CAPTURE HAMMERFEST BASE

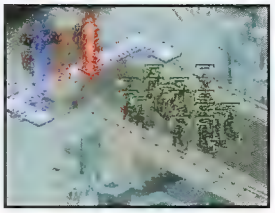
After the attack on the bridge, take the three MRLSs east, defeat the Nod cycles, then move northwest and re-enter the water. Destroy the radar station then go north and hit the power stations to the east while keeping your MRLSs out of enemy range.

Go back round to the southeast, past the now deactivated Obelisk of Light and keep going until you reach a small base. Take this over and build up some rocket infantry units.

Move the MRLSs along the top of the map to the west. Blow up the cliff wall and venture southwest across the Tiberium field. Hammerfest is to the east now. Trash a few power stations to make the firestorm walls inoperative, then move in with some engineers. Take the construction yard and the base is yours. Repair your new base and get everything up to speed.

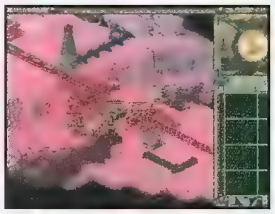
The final base is to the south. Get a large army of Titans and destroy the SAM sites and lasers first. Send in the mop-up forces and clean all opposing forces off the map to proceed to the next mission.

The objects that fall from the bridge can be used to repair your vehicles.


Any attempt to breach the base via these firewalls will end in complete failure.

8 RETRIEVE DISRUPTOR CRYSTALS

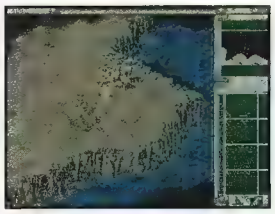
Load up the APC with infantry, gather together all amphibious vehicles and MRLSs, and head east up the cliff. Work your way south through the waterways, round the back of the base and launch your attack. Blow up both engines on the front and rear of the train to find the crystals. Simple.


Getting into the base couldn't be easier. Just take all the vehicles you can through this canyon to reach the base in mere seconds.

As soon as you touch the crystals the mission ends.

9 RESCUE THE PRISONERS [OPTIONAL ONE]

Snake your way east along the bottom of the map fending off attacks as you go. Eventually you find a bridge. Cross the bridge, eliminate the perimeter defences and head north through the base. Destroy the SAM sites to allow the prisoners to escape.

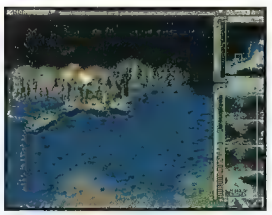

The route to the prisoners is directly east.

9 DESTROY CHEMICAL SUPPLY STATION [OPTIONAL TWO]

The first problem is finding a place to set up home. Move east until you find a laser guarding some chemical tanks. Wipe this lot out and set your base up here. Concentrate on defence firstly by building plenty of RPG towers. When the base is secure, use MRLSs to scout the whole map and take out any SAM sites you can.

Assemble a mighty force of Titans, MRLSs, Orcas and rocket infantry. Position your infantry behind the main Nod base over on the northwest side of the map. Move the Titans, MRLSs (and any other units you want) to attack the frontal defences. Send the waiting rocket infantry southeast to destroy the advanced power plants. Use the Orcas to help them.

With the power down, the frontal assault cuts scythe through the base. Keep backing up your forces and the battle is relatively short.


Meticulously check the coastline for SAM sites, making sure you remove as many as possible before launching any aerial forays.

9 MINE THE POWERGRID [OPTIONAL THREE]

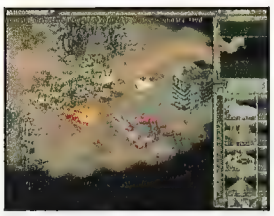
You can only reach this optional mission after putting the Ghoststalker into the train in the top left corner of the map in option 2. If you don't do this, you'll go straight to the main part of the mission.

9. [MAIN] DESTROY CHEMICAL MISSILE STATION [MAIN]

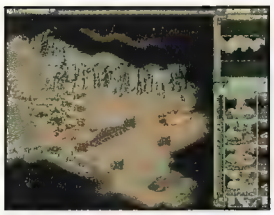
Use a force of Titans and engineers to take the base to the

east. Use this base as your staging ground for a larger assault on the main enemy fortress. Use the captured structures to strengthen your force with Tick Tanks and a few mobile repair vehicles. You also need some artillery units and mobile sensor array.

Advance your army east using cycles and MSAs to scout the area ahead. Destroy the Obelisks of Light with artillery and make good use of the Titans against other defences. Keep edging forward in this manner and the missile plant is eventually destroyed.



Once you've taken over this base, use it as a staging ground for your next assault.



Stealth generators can cause a few problems. Counteract this by using MSAs and artillery.

10 DESTROY PROTOTYPE FACILITY [OPTION ONE]

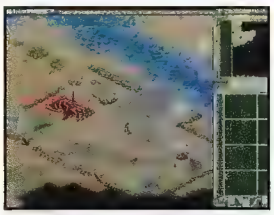
Take your merry band of mutants southeast until they reach a small Nod base. Move the Ghoststalker in to take out the northeast laser. Retreat to safety, and then send the Mutant hijacker in to steal the APC. Move everybody into that and head west to the Tiberium field to heal.

Now take the APC across the river just south of the broken bridge and keep heading south until you reach a bridge going northeast. Cross the bridge and drive east. Eventually you reach the main Nod facility at which point your reinforcements appear in the southwest of the map.

Start building here. Make sure you are well defended and have four harvesters going. Get together a decent sized force and advance back north to the initial Nod outpost. Time it so this force attacks while an APC of engineers takes over the structures.

Now use this as your primary base. Start constructing Tick Tanks, artillery and MSAs. Move a large force east and destroy everything in the area. Keep advancing until you smash the prototype facility.

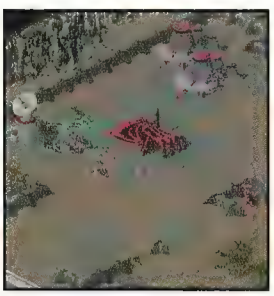
Concentrate on taking out the stealth generators first, that way the rest of the enemy structures are revealed.



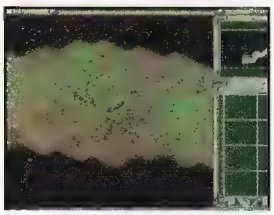
The APC is not well guarded and, once in your possession, proves to be invaluable to your cause.

10 DESTROY PROTOTYPE FACILITY [OPTION TWO]

This mission is very similar to the last apart from the map layout. From the start, bear west to the little base, sneak everyone into the APC and continue west. When you reach the main base your reinforcements appear just north of the starting point. Follow the same basic strategy as in the previous mission and you shouldn't have any problem overrunning the first small base and the prototype manufacturing facility.



Once again, the APC is not a problem to steal.



Use the Tiberium field to heal any injured mutants.

11 WEATHER THE STORM

Set up around the Kodiak, then get rid of those damn artillery units. When you have a strong base, place a group of Titans in the Nod Tiberium field in the northeast and have them destroy any Harvesters that enter. Send another group of about seven or eight Titans to the north of the map and then east. Some cloaked

you'll be back

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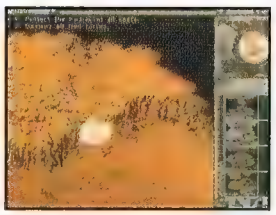
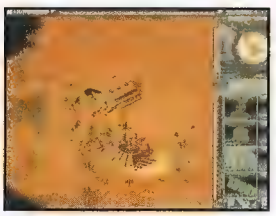
advanced power plants come into view. Pound away at those and at the same time take your other Titan force east to wipe out the now deactivated Obelisks of Light. However, if you spot any errant Harvesters, destroy them too. With Nod's economy severely crippled it shouldn't take too long to massacre the rest of the base.



The artillery surrounding your base is a total pain in the arse. Get rid of it as soon as you can otherwise it'll rip you to pieces.



Make sure you build your structures close to the Kodiak to give it more protection.

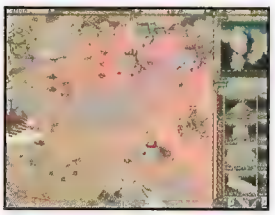
12 FINAL CONFLICT

Secure the first base. Send an APC full of engineers to the northwest corner of the map where a few ancient Mammoth tanks can be found. Move them east to destroy the Obelisk of Light and at the same time send the engineers into the base to capture as much as they can. Quickly build a barracks and advance south destroying the first ICBM and the remaining buildings.

When you've captured this base head south from your original base to find the next Nod stronghold. Your artillery should sort out the defences here, swoop your forces into the wound and destroy them from the inside out. Eliminate the second ICBM in the south.

Now march west. When you reveal the island and the Obelisks of Light, let rip with your artillery. Head onto the island and target the construction yard first. With that out of the way you can pretty much clean up, finally destroy the third ICBM.

The final Temple of Nod and Pyramid can be located on the far east of the map. Fortunately, you'll find that there is barely any power serving this base anymore, and so the final blow should be decisive

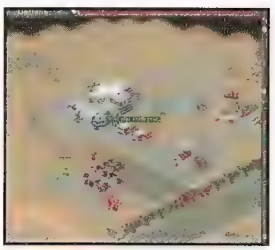


You only need a small foothold in this base in order to advance further and ultimately destroy the nearby ICBM.

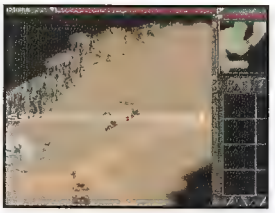
NOD – PART 2

7 ESCORT BIO-TOXIN TRUCKS [OPTIONAL]

Move your force north with the Cyborg Commando at the head of the group. Eventually you find a large tiberium field, move south through this and then veer northeast until you reach an old Nod base and two bio-toxin trucks. Trundle them east and then south. The Cyborg Commando should be able to defend them to the bitter end. When you move past the small GDI base at the end, the mission is successful.



The trucks you are looking for are located next to an old civilian hospital.



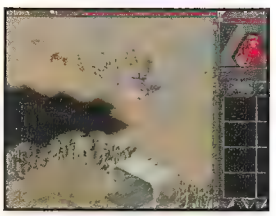
Use the rest of your forces to cover the trucks and you should easily pass the final GDI base.

7 DESTROY GDI RESEARCH FACILITY

The spy can make contact with the mutants in the city to the northeast. Move everybody west along the cliff until you reach the tunnel. Destroy the lurking forces and go through the tunnel. You'll meet resistance at the other side, but you should be able to head north onto the ridge to take over the existing base. Move your newly arrived MCV there too and start building.

Amass a sizeable force and head east to claim the southern tip of the GDI base. Set this up as your main base and build plenty of Tick Tanks and Devil's Tongues. Rush north and blast the rest of the base to pieces. The research facility is in the northeast corner. Flatten that and Nod's your uncle.

The mutants offer great help at the start of the mission, but they are eventually whittled down. Don't worry though – more arrive later.



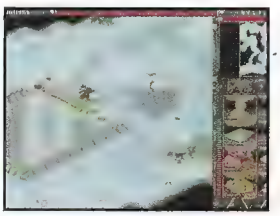
Get to the old Nod base before the GDI get there first and destroy it. If this happens, the mission is almost impossible to complete.

8 VILLAINESS IN DISTRESS

When you gain battlefield control, move Slavik and the rest of your group south to join up with the rest of your force. When everybody's together, move them northeast, one by one, across the ice. Go east until you reach the dirt track and then head south. Follow the tracks through the tunnel to find a GDI base. The Cyborg Commando can take control of this situation with the remaining units acting as backup.

Quickly erect a barracks and then send engineers in to capture as much as possible. Establish numerous Harvesters and Refineries and build up a hefty force of Titans using captured buildings. Order this force south. Go past the Orca transport and keep going into the base. Plough through, rescue Oxanna, and place her in the Orca transport. Finally, move Slavik into the Orca too and the mission ends.

Lead the assault on the eastern base with the Cyborg Commando.



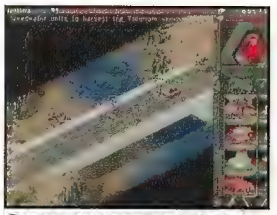
Once Oxanna has been sprung, run straight for the waiting Orca.

9 ESTABLISH NOD PRESENCE [FIRST CHOICE]

Sprint directly northeast to the Nod base and immediately set up walls for protection against the creeping Tiberium veins. Build Obelisk of Light defences along the southeastern approach to halt GDI attacks.

Send Devil's Tongues back to the start and have them scorch northwards. There are many smaller GDI bases here, and with the help of some engineers and a few well-placed chemical missile attacks these outposts are soon annihilated.

The main problem on this level is nature herself. The Tiberium veins are a constant menace and the large Visceroids can destroy infantry and vehicles. Be patient but ruthless and the level is yours.



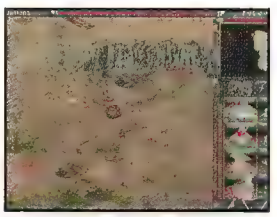
Try and get as many of your units as possible across to the northeast of the map where you can re-establish your base.

The time has come to use Weedeaters to keep the potentially lethal veins at bay.

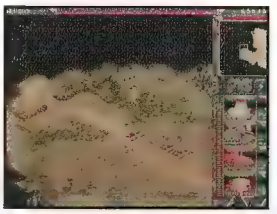
9 PROTECT WASTE CONVOY [SECOND CHOICE]

Set-up quickly and throw down plenty of SAM sites and Obelisks. Keep a close eye on your defences and send a strong artillery force up the northwest dirt track. When the entire road has been cleared, build a missile silo and waste facility to start the convoy rolling.

It takes eight trucks to make one missile, so you'll find that you have plenty of time to produce more offensive units. When you are strong enough, roll north and finish off the already slightly weakened GDI fortress.



Using a stealth generator thoroughly protects your base and confuses the enemy.



Artillery has the longest range of all offensive vehicles, so use it wisely.

10 DESTROY MAMMOTH MK II PROTOTYPE

Sneak your spy over to the southeast corner of the map and enter the communications building. After the demonstration your reinforcements arrive. Now

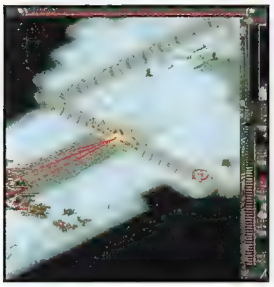
GDI FINAL CONFLICT

Take over the first base with ease and then build up your resources.

it's time to manoeuvre them towards the spy and build your base south of the communications centre.

Start churning out artillery and support units. Send cycles up the road to scout out base defences. Move the artillery and co northwest to the base entrance. Advance slowly east towards the Mammoth's pen using support from rocket artillery to take out any aerial threats. Destroy the Mammoth and the mission ends.

The spy has no weapons whatsoever, so be sure to keep him well out of sight.

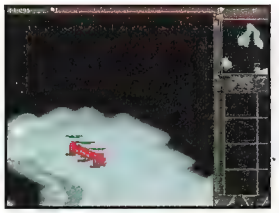


A large force of Tick Tanks should be strong enough to break through the pen and ultimately destroy the Mammoth Mk II prototype.

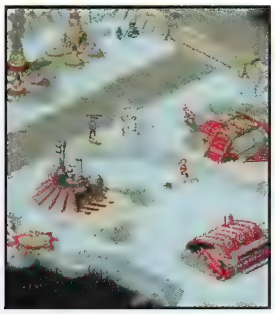
11 CAPTURE JAKE MCNEIL

Now put everybody onboard the APCs, go west along the bottom of the map and enter the outpost via the slope at the rear. Unload the soldiers and get them to kill the guarding infantry. Quickly move the engineers into each of the main structures and you'll find that when Jake arrives he is captured.

Take him back east to the starting location and transfer him into the waiting APC to complete the mission.



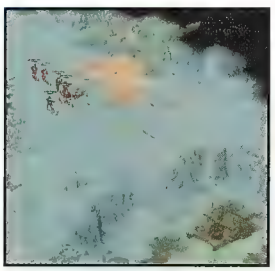
Put the soldiers into the captured APC and roll west.



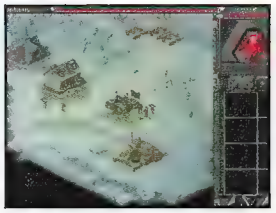
Use engineers to capture the buildings and mutant soldiers to kill the guards.

12 ILLEGAL DATA TRANSFER [OPTIONAL]

From the start head north along the ridge, blow up the destructible rock face, and enter the communications centre for the first code. Head north and then east up the destructible cliff. Hug the top of the map as you continue east to the next communications centre. Grab the code and blow up the nearby cliff. Edge down the slope and maintain your easterly direction. The road quickly turns southeast. Keep moving to reveal the final communications building. With all three codes in your possession, sprint south to the waiting APC.



Quickly nip in and steal the code. No problem.



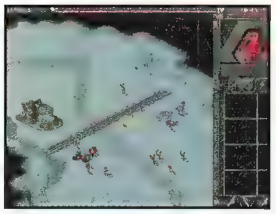
Once you've stolen this code, there is just one to go. This mission is very simple providing you are quick.

12 A NEW BEGINNING

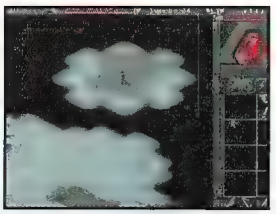
After the initial fracas, move the first missile into position, but refrain from deploying it. There's no need to start the timer yet. Get a few refineries going and then scout the entire area with cycles. Push a force northeast to the next launch site and use engineers to set up a small base within their base. Building a Temple of Nod for Cyborg Commandos helps considerably here.

When you've deployed the first missile, charge to the launch site on the east side of the map and deploy that one too. Now launch the third and final ICBM back in your base.

With that done the Philadelphia is destroyed and the game is won. Sit back and enjoy the end sequence. PCZ



After the cunning deception to get into the base, try and set up a massive army.



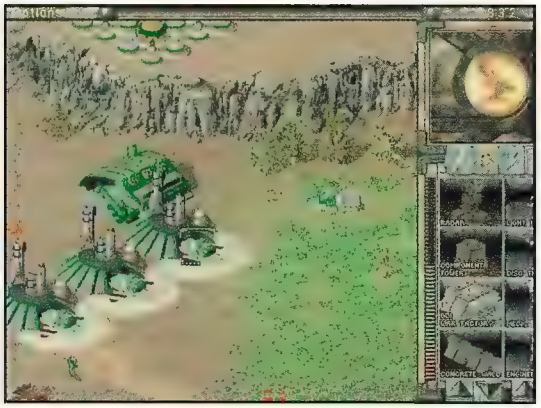
Attack cycles make excellent scouts. Send a few of these all over the map to reveal the locations of the ICBM launch sites.

MULTIPLAYER TACTICS

Make sure you know your multiplayer onions

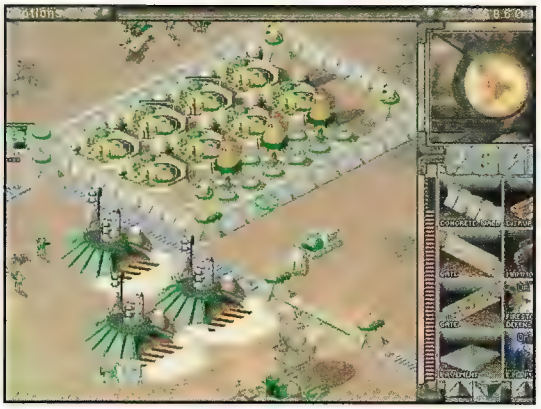
ECONOMY

The only way to win multiplayer games is to develop a strong economy. Set up at least three refineries and five harvesters ASAP. While this stunts your unit and auxiliary structure production early on in the game, you'll find it won't take long to catch up and ultimately surpass your opponents. If you can win the production war, you can win the military war.



SECOND BASE

Instead of expanding your base to an unmanageable size, begin building a second base where you can house auxiliary units such as power plants and Tiberium silos.

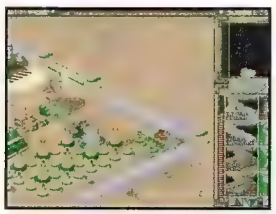


SELLING OUT

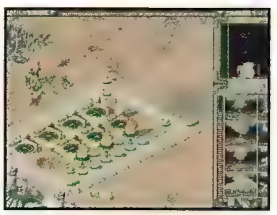
One of the sneakiest things to do in a multiplayer game is to capture enemy structures and then sell them instantly. Make sure you select buildings that are worth more than the cost of your engineers though; otherwise it's simply not worth it. Also, try to go for important buildings such as Temple of Nods, Tech Centres or GDI Upgrade Centres.

WALL-TO-WALL COVERAGE

So which wall is best? Well, the laser wall is easily destroyed and firestorm walls run out of power, which leaves one option. Thankfully, the old concrete wall is still the best form of defence due to the fact that it takes longer to destroy. The good thing about this is that it gives you time to manoeuvre units in position thus repelling the attack before a breach occurs.



Though good for a while, the firestorm wall has limited power. Once this power runs out you are left with no defence whatsoever.



You'll find that concrete walls last forever and are generally a much stronger option than anything else.

DEAR WANDY

A problem aired is a problem repaired. So don't be bashful, just tell us your troubles and we promise we'll help you out

PHYSICIAN Phil Wand

COME IN, SIT DOWN

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50.

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in type of thing. And as an extra incentive, every single month we offer a cool £50 to the reader who sends in the most interesting query or toppest tip. No, really. Send in as much relevant information as you can.

WRITE TO Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read *every* techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone, as you're unlikely to reach someone who can help. Thanks.

AMNESIA

Q Is there any way to find out how many memory slots I have or are being used without having to take the PC to bits and actually look?

Jacko

A **If you don't have the motherboard manual, it's screwdriver time. Motherboards use off the peg BIOS chips, and although these often report BANK 1 being used, BANK 2 being free, and so on, there's no guarantee that the motherboard has as many sockets as the BIOS can support. So let's forget all that and take the lid off instead.**

These days you'll find two very different types of memory socket, 72 pin and 168 pin. To save you having to count the pins (hey, we're not *that* cruel), the 72-pin sockets have one locating bump in the middle, and the 168 pin have two.

Be careful if you have both types, as it's not safe to assume you can fill them all up. They often share control lines between them, meaning you can use all the 72 pins or all the 168 pins, but not both. In fact, we've never seen a motherboard that lets you use them all together...

MILLENNIUM SYMPHONY

Q Great Magazine – keep up the good work! Just one query – maybe some of your readers out there can help me out.

I am in charge of the music setup for a Private Millennium Party, and have decided to run it all from PC. That way we can have over 1,500 tracks on a standard 10Gb hard drive played out using *Winamp*. Anyway, I've recorded and crunched most of the tracks, and have installed a SoundBlaster Live! card. Will four to six sets of computer speakers be adequate for a party of 150 people? Or would anyone suggest using an amplifier between the sound card and regular hi-fi speakers? I've been told by Creative that I should use amplified speakers, but they couldn't suggest any for optimum results. Can you help?

Neil Mansell

A **We like the idea of some modern technology providing the music, just pray nobody honks down the back of your PC. Anyway, to start with, scrap the computer speakers. They might be fine for going 'ping' and for the anguished screams of victims in *Half-Life*, but when it comes to music reproduction, they suck. So go for the hi-fi setup. You can always parallel the SoundBlaster output (ie double up on your output cable) into two or more amplifiers, and thus run more than one set of speakers.**

As for how much power you require, it depends on the room and the style of music. If you have a medium-sized lounge and a couple of old Phil Collins albums, you're not going to need much in the way of decibel oomph. If you have a large room full of heavy rock fans yelling, screaming, and carving their initials into your Welsh dresser, get the biggest set of speakers and amps you can lay your hands on. We would say go hire some, but you'll probably need a second mortgage just to hire a tin whistle over the new year.

If you can, do a trial run in the room and remember that bodies absorb sound and make allowances for this. Think about getting the speakers up high. Most importantly, have a good night, and where's our invitation?

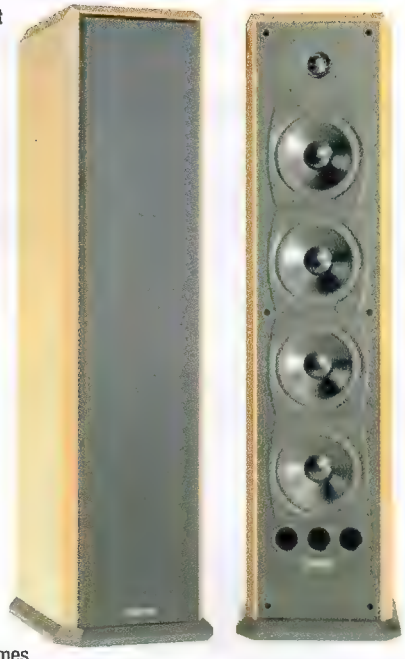
DIGITAL VOLATILE DISK

Q When I enable CD audio within a game, the video immediately becomes choppy to the point where the game is unplayable. The problem is not restricted only to games. By way of a test, I tried moving an open window around while playing a CD, and got a similar result. As soon as the CD is disabled within the game, said video goes like shit off a shiny new shovel. While this isn't exactly the end of the world, many games are much enhanced by the accompanying soundtrack, so if it can be resolved, so much the better. There are no conflicts according to Win 98/Norton Utilities, and I've downloaded the latest drivers for all of the relevant components to no obvious positive effect. I am now wondering where to go next. Any thoughts?

I have a Pentium II 450, 256Mb RAM, Video Card: Matrox G400, SoundBlaster Live!, Pioneer DVD-113, Win 98 with Service Pack 1.

Sean Gibbins

A **That's very odd. When CD audio is played back, the drive just acts as a standard CD player, and outputs the music as an audio signal – which passes straight through the**



Forget those horrid plastic things, meet a pair of Mission 753 Freedoms.

"So I now have a game which I bought mainly to play online, but which I can't play over the Net. Please help because that is a lot of money for me to waste on a useless game"

KARL PERCY, FRUSTRATED BY PATCHES FOR ONLINE *HALF-LIFE*

£50 WINNER!

SECRET SOFTWARE

Q Microsoft have hidden some useful utilities on their Windows 98 CD. Locate the SETUP.EXE installer in the \TOOLS\RESKIT folder and you'll install the Windows Resource Kit. There are some really useful things here, for example the INF installer. Now, I don't now about everybody else, but Windows doesn't automatically detect a Voodoo Banshee or Realtek network card, and you're always left to install the software for them manually. The Resource Kit allows you to add drivers to the Windows database, so your machine automatically detects and installs them during any installation.

There's also *Batch 98* which allows you to specify global installation properties, so you don't have to select silly options (eg time zone, product key, username, etc) during reinstalls. *Checklinks* is also a hugely useful utility, searching the Windows Start Menu for dead links. *Microsoft File Information* tells you a lot more about file types – what they are, what type of program you need to open them, and so on.

There's a whole lot more, so why not install it and take a look. See what else Microsoft has hidden away without telling you!

Jonathan Rudge

A **Your nosiness has just won you a bunch of ten fivers. Thanks for sharing the tip with us.**

sound card mixer and off to the speakers. We're wondering whether it's caused by the Audio CD support provided by your DVD drive. We would recommend contacting Pioneer and explaining the problem to them. In the meantime, you can always try attaching a 'plain' CD-ROM drive to your system and seeing if that displays the same weird glitch.

MY PING PONGS

Q I write regarding the Internet player's worst nightmare – no, I'm not talking about that lofty git who haunts the biggest gun and shoots you whenever you walk past. I refer to lag. I have a 56K modem and a normal telephone line, yet the lowest ping I get at Gamespy is 597!

At first I thought it was my server. A quick call later and I'd configured my modem to its maximum setting. Result: a ping of 550. I then tried joining a friend's game. Totally unplayable. I ended up four down in two minutes, with them laughing their heads off. Is there anything I can do? Any software upgrades I can get to speed the connection up?

Stinger

A You don't say which service provider you use, but we'd would recommend trying one of the 'less popular' ones. Some free ISPs have cottoned on to the popularity of online gaming, and have limited the amount of bandwidth you can have. This lets all their nice web surfing and email reading users go about their business unhindered. Internet games can hog more than 30Kbits of bandwidth per user, whereas web and email fire in little bursts. Guess which one the ISP prefers!

You also didn't say what type of modem you're using. If you're using a software modem (eg Winmodem), this could be half your bother. It's cheap, but it calls on your CPU to do a lot of its work, and thus takes a noticeable chunk from the processing power left over for games. And if you're playing an intensive game like *Unreal Tournament*, a softmodem will be fatal to your ping. Try replacing it with the latest Hayes Accura, as we recommended recently.

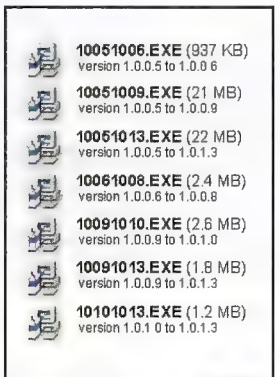
VEGETABLE PATCHES

Q I've recently acquired *Half-Life*, but then I found that I needed to get all of the patches on your cover mount discs in order to play it online. I got to the latest patch, v1.0.1.3, and it wouldn't let me install it. I didn't understand the reason, because it didn't make any sense. I have also tried downloading it from the auto download that comes with the game, but it just crashes out.

So I now have a game which I bought to play mainly online, but which I can't play over the Net. Please help because that is a lot of money for me to waste on a useless game!

Karl Percy

A You have to be careful with the upgrade patches. There are so many about, and they all upgrade from one specific version to another. The clue is in the name. For example, the 10051009.exe installer file will upgrade version 1.0.0.5 to version 1.0.0.9, and that version only. *Half-Life* will tell you which version you are running via a number in the corner of the screen at the main menu. If you don't have the correct patch, you can either look for it on the File Planet website www.fileplanet.com, or reinstall *Half-Life* from the CD and step through the updates with whatever sequence of patches you have from the *PC ZONE* cover discs.



All the patch files available for *Half-Life*.

CARRERA FOR TURBO

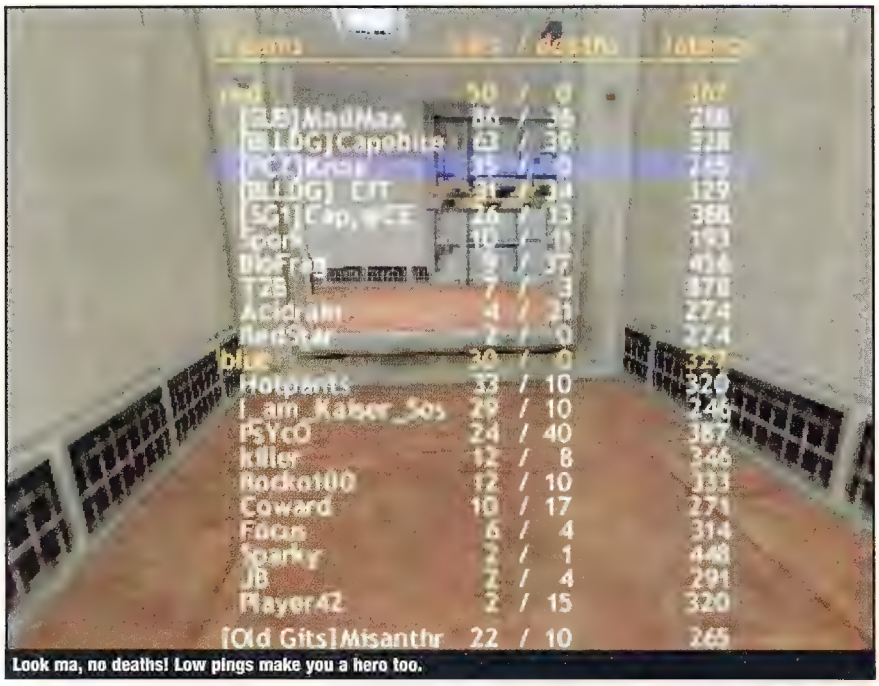
Q I need your help. My PC is getting a bit long in the tooth, and as upgrading it isn't an option I'm going to have to invest in a new system. All my other bits are fine (17inch monitor, keyboard and mouse), but I'm wondering what I'll be able to hang between them for the princely sum of £1,000?

Bearing in mind the sort of games I want to play (*Ultima Ascension*, *Half-Life* and *Quake III*), what should I spend my money on? What's the best balance of processor speed and graphics card? How much memory am I going to need to get through the next six months? Is a DVD drive really necessary? If you can provide a shopping list, I don't mind doing the building myself, but is this the best way to go?

David Brinnen

A If you're not doing anything for the next few months then it's possible to build your own PC, but we wouldn't necessarily advise it. It's one of those jobs that could take a weekend or a couple of months – you need a lot of expert knowledge and a good bit of luck. Plus, it's not actually going to work out that much cheaper than buying it from a reputable source.

For £1,000 you can get a new AMD Athlon K7 or lower-spec PIII processor, along with 128Mb RAM, a Vortex2 sound card, Matrox G400 Max, 13Gb hard drive and the latest DVD drive. This sort of setup will easily last you through the whole of next year and you can get it – or a variation on the theme – from Carrera on 0181 307 2800.


Hotpants 33 / 10 320
I_am_Kaiser_Sos 29 / 10 246
PsYcO 24 / 40 367
killer 12 / 8 346
Rocko100 12 / 10 133
Coward 10 / 17 271
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JB 2 / 4 291
Player42 2 / 15 320
[Old Gits]Misanthr 22 / 10 265
Look ma, no deaths! Low pings make you a hero too.

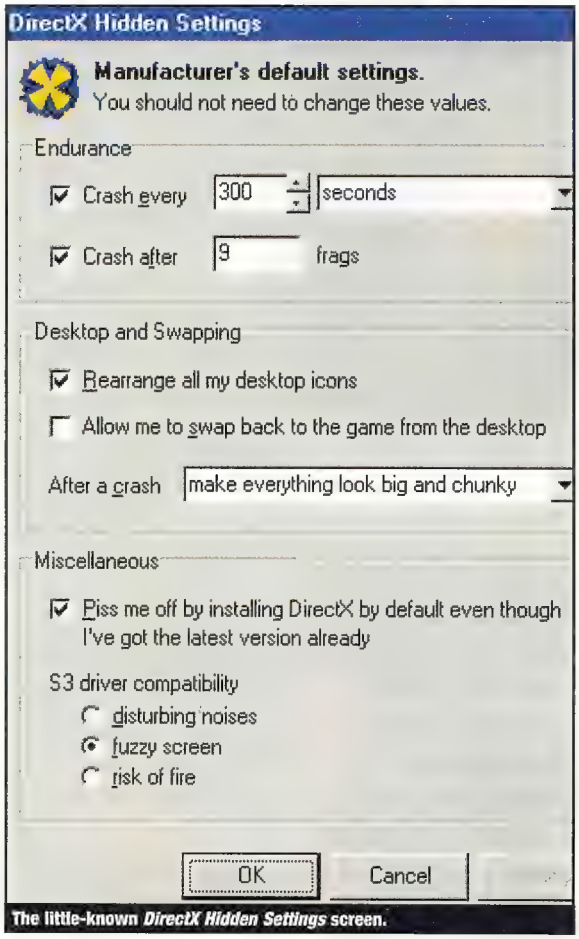
PAIN IN THE S3

Q My mate has some sort of S3 and, whenever he installs DirectX on its own, it asks whether or not to use the new video driver. If you say "No", then DirectX works fine. If you say "Yes", the screen goes all fuzzy. No problem. But some games re-install DirectX over the top and use this new driver without asking. Problem. I was wondering if there are any updated firmware files available for download, if so, where can I get them?

Jake Dean

A This might sound like a weird question, but does he have an internal modem set for COM4? Some older S3 cards have a nasty habit of using the memory addresses reserved for COM4 when running at anything other than 640x480 pixels in 16 colours. The simple cure is to disable one of the onboard I/O ports and set the modem to that port (eg COM2).

The other cause could well be the DirectX drivers themselves. Early versions did have faulty S3 drivers, so try downloading the latest from Microsoft. You can also try the Winfiles site at www.winfiles.com for the very latest S3 drivers. PCZ


DirectX Hidden Settings
Manufacturer's default settings.
You should not need to change these values.
Endurance
Crash every 300 seconds
Crash after 9 frags
Desktop and Swapping
Rearrange all my desktop icons
Allow me to swap back to the game from the desktop
After a crash make everything look big and chunky
Miscellaneous
Piss me off by installing DirectX by default even though I've got the latest version already
S3 driver compatibility
disturbing noises
fuzzy screen
risk of fire
OK
Cancel
The little-known *DirectX Hidden Settings* screen.

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers...

ANSWERED BY Adam Phillips

LIVING IN A WORLD OF HURT?

We're here to help. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, then drop us a line. But please remember that technical issues are not covered by Watchdog – if you have a techie problem, write to Dear Wandy (page 130).

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

EMAIL us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **'Watchdog'.**

AMBIDEXTROUS SAITEK

Q I've been having problems with my Saitek Cyborg 3D. It worked fine for a couple of months, then suddenly (and for no apparent reason), it started behaving strangely. Whenever I pushed forward on the stick, the game, whatever it happened to be, would jerk and I would get an uncontrollable right-hand lock.

This made flight sims and driving games somewhat tricky to play. I tried recalibrating it but the joystick status became 'not connected' whenever I pushed forward and right.

The reason I didn't just take the stick back to the shop was because something similar has happened to me with the previous two sticks I've owned – they work fine for a bit, then go wrong for no reason. The other two sticks were also made by Saitek, but were different models (an X8-30 and a Cyborg2000).

I started to think that perhaps it was my joystick port that was at fault, so I asked some people more knowledgeable than I, to find out if this was probable. Strangely enough, one person I asked said that they had the same problem with a Cyborg 3D, and had got through four of them before giving up and buying an MS Sidewinder. This lead me to the conclusion that Saitek make their joysticks very badly indeed, and they break easily.

The reason I don't just buy another make of joystick is that the Cyborg 3D is an excellent joystick with lots of features, but most importantly, it is fully adjustable for right and left handed gamers. Having both handedness (if that's a word) in the household makes this feature very useful.

Matt Lovegrove

A Hmm... perhaps the best course of action would have been to contact Saitek again for the over eager auto-responses. As for your problems, Westwood explained: *"It does sound like you've got programs running in the background that are taking up memory and slowing things down. The best way to clean out background programs is to press ctrl-alt-del and close all the programs apart from Explorer and Systry. Generally, the game should run fine after that."*

To be honest though, it sounds like you're already doing that so we've forwarded your details to the powers that be at Westwood just in case the above solution doesn't glean you a fully playable game.

SUN GOING DOWN ON TIBERIA?

Those pesky FAQs are causing players a few problems...

COMPLAINT #1

Q After waiting for years, I was delighted when *Tiberian Sun* was finally released. Unfortunately, it doesn't work on my PC. To try and fix the problem, I updated all of my graphics/sound drivers as they were what appeared to be the problem.

Unfortunately, this didn't work either and so I used Westwood's online tech support to send them a message.

A couple of days later, I was sent an automated FAQ which did not contain an answer to my problem (a lock-up upon launching the game). The FAQ recommended that I send an email again if the problem wasn't solved. I have now done this about three times but I keep getting sent the same FAQ over and over again, despite following the instructions for re-emailing them.

Because of this, I now have almost no choice but to take the game back, unless by some miracle Westwood can be asked to send a proper reply. I hope that Westwood will take notice of this letter and get their customer services working properly.

CuriousSquid

A Not being able to play the delights that *Tiberian Sun* has to offer is verging on the criminal! We dispatched your complaint to the bods at Westwood to find out if you really do need to take the game back... and exchange it for a copy of *Homeworld*. They responded: "We're sorry you got the FAQ more than once. That shouldn't have happened, and we've already made improvements to the system to make sure it doesn't happen again. The FAQ does solve almost every technical problem we've encountered, but on the second try, you're supposed to get a live response."

In the meantime, your email address has been forwarded to Westwood so you should be kicking Nod butt in no time at all. Let us know otherwise...

COMPLAINT #2

Q I recently bought a copy of *Tiberian Sun* for my PC. It installed fine but it refuses to run and constantly hangs my computer when I try to do so. Despite filling in the Westwood technical report questionnaire on more than two occasions and frequently sending them emails on the subject, all I have had back is the auto-reply message and the FAQ.

I am running the game on a Dell Dimension xpsd300 which has an up-to-date copy of *Windows 95*. I found, when surfing the Net last week, that other people are having exactly the same problem as me and the unofficial answer was to try and shut down all the programs from the control panel as the memory was filling up – if that didn't work, they didn't know what would. I tried that but it still hasn't worked.

This was obviously a problem that Westwood could have corrected during the programming/testing stages as most people still run 95 at the moment. So come on Westwood! You designed a brilliant game but your support for it is letting you down at the moment.

Peter O'Regan

A That pesky FAQ – Westwood apologised

The after-sales support team finally get theirs.

***Tiberian Sun*: surprisingly memory hungry given the basic graphics.**

"I class myself as a reasonable bloke but this experience of using the Net to obtain goods abroad has left a nasty taste in my mouth... as well as hitting my wallet"

TIM DYSON, BLEEMING FURIOUS BY ALL ACCOUNTS

to ask for their advice before penning a letter to Watchdog. In the meantime, Paul Moodie, the General Manager for the company in the UK, offered the following advice: *"Saitek is the No.1 PC joystick brand in the UK because we produce the high-quality products that customers demand. We maintain this position by treating all customer enquiries seriously. If Mr Lovegrove would contact our technical support engineer (01454 855050), we will resolve his apparent problem. If this proves unacceptable, we will offer a full refund."*

Can't get any fairer than that, Matt.

DACS DILEMMA

Q The problem that I have is with the one we all 'love to loathe' and my phone line. I have two phone lines in my house provided with a DACS box. We had the lines installed when we first moved into the house six years ago. All went well until June this year when I bought a modem and tried to connect to the Internet. The problem is that,even with my brand new 56K V.90 modem, I can't connect to the Internet at speeds of above 21,600 bps and subsequently can't do anything much – not to mention download files.

Through testing four modems installed on different PCs in my home and testing my PC and modem in a friend's house, I reckon the problem has to be with the DACS box. I have called BT on many occasions to complain but to little avail...

Michael Adams

A **Good old BT! We love 'em. Off Watchdog went to the bods at British Telecom to see if indeed your problems were down to their box...**

"DACS is normally capable of supporting modems (V.34 and V90) at speeds between 24 and 28 Kilobit/s on the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN),"* said a spokesperson. *"In general, DACS supports modems provided they have fallback speeds down to 2,400 bits per second. Normally, modems will operate at much faster speeds but occasional line or temporary difficulties, as well as problems with modems themselves, can cause reduced speed operation. Of course, BT Highway and ISDN digital network services are designed to support faster transmission of computer data and Internet access than can be handled by modems over the PSTN."

Hmm... so BT reckon that it's not a problem with your DACS box in other words. Michael, monitor the situation over the next month and if you're still banging your head against a brick wall, drop Watchdog another line... PCZ

BLEEDIN' BLEEM!

As all and sundry will know by now, Bleem is a PlayStation emulator which has been raising heckles at Sony over the thorny and rather muddy issue of copyright infringement. Against this heated background, Watchdog received the following two complaints from readers about their Bleem orders that have seemingly been ignored by the company behind the software. Despite cash changing hands...

COMPLAINT #1

Q I thought I would drop you a line to complain about the non-arrival of a piece of computer software – the software in question is Bleem, the infamous emulator that Sony is none too happy about.

To put it mildly, I am rather upset too, as I ordered the above on 20 July and am still waiting. I have sent three emails to their online site to complain. I have yet to receive a reply. In the meantime, they have taken my money as I paid via credit card.

Can you help at all? If there are problems at Bleem in getting the CD out to me, then at least they could inform me – it's not too much to ask is it? I class myself as a reasonable bloke but this experience of using the Net to obtain goods abroad has left a nasty taste in my mouth... as well as hitting my wallet.

Tim Dyson

COMPLAINT #2

Q I was very excited to hear about a PlayStation emulator (Bleem!) that emulated the PSX perfectly on the PC, so I went to Bleem.com and purchased it online for a sum of nearly 50 dollars. I then bought about 15 PlayStation games to go with it and waited for Bleem to arrive. According to the Web site, Bleem should have been delivered in around three weeks because it was an international order – I live in Kuwait.

After three weeks, I became worried, but knowing the distance between the USA and Kuwait, I wasn't overly worried. In the meantime, I did write an email to Bleem concerning my order. A month passed and by this time, I had written a record of five emails and visited their site many times. But alas no Bleem. Now my parents tell me that Bleem has withdrawn the money from the credit card that I used to purchase it with.

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So now I have 15 PlayStation games which all cost a bundle, two very pissed off parents and no Bleem! I visited their site and saw what they said about the trouble they've had with some orders, but I am still not convinced because they have not replied to any of my emails!

Farhad Agzamov

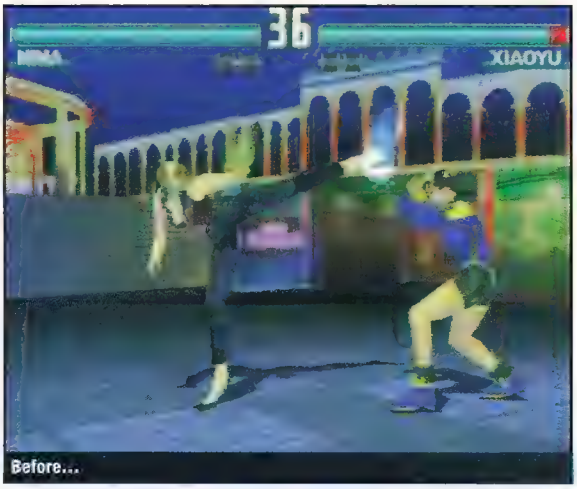
A **Highly worrying stuff. We contacted the company directly and asked one of their head honchos, David Herpolsheimer, to come up with an explanation for their shoddy service: *"Thanks for bringing this to our attention,"* he offered. *"Without a doubt, the shipping of individual orders has proven to be the most onerous task (besides fighting off Sony, of course) we've had to face. The logistics of the entire operation has proven to be nothing less than a nightmare, particularly with the high occurrence of fraud in international orders."***

In both your cases though, Bleem claim that the problem is down to logistics and personnel: *"Neither of which are, or should be, the concern of your readers,"* offered Herpolsheimer. *"We ran out of product, had every conceivable problem getting the new build completed, then lost our primary shipping person to Epstein-Barr Syndrome (on her back for the next six months, I understand). All of which, by the way, happened right in the middle of Sony's latest legal effort to keep us from selling Bleem! So orders fell terribly behind."*

He continued: *"The whole mess really stemmed out of our desire to provide the best pricing for international customers. We were able to secure excellent pricing on shipping, compared to any other mail-order business ($15.95 anywhere in the world, compared to $25-50 for most others). Unfortunately, I think we underestimated the amount of work involved, given our limited resources (until just recently, Bleem, LLC consisted entirely of the programmer and myself – we've now added a couple of people to help)."*

He went on to say that the mail order problems have now been resolved. In the meantime, he has looked into the both your cases and has some good news and some not-so-good news. Apparently Tim, you should have received your order by now – Bleem claim that the software was delivered and signed for on 14 September. If this is not the case, let us know.

As for you, Farhad, Bleem say that they sent the order but have been unable to track your package with the delivery service company. Bleem say that they have re-sent the order and you should have received the software by now. Again, let us know if you haven't.



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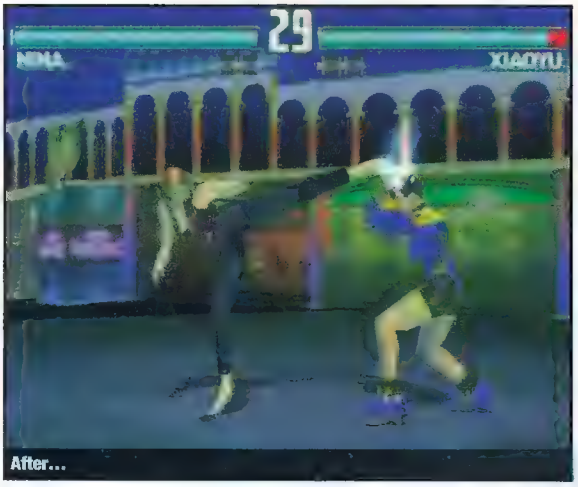

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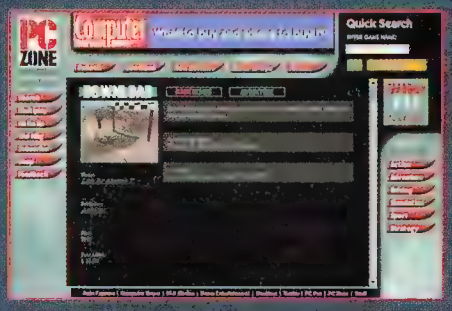

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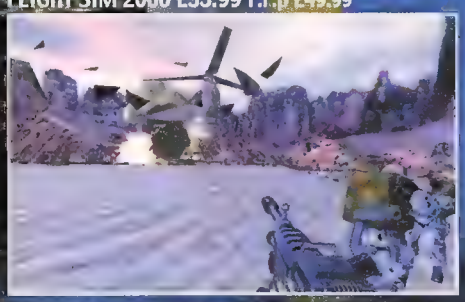

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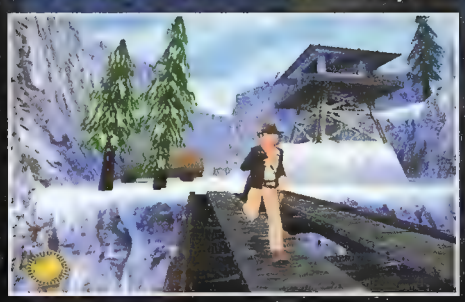

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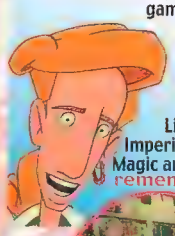

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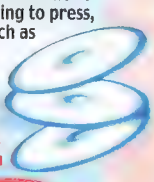

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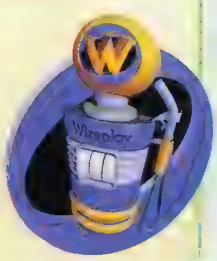

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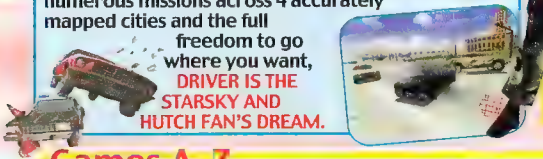

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DIABLO II

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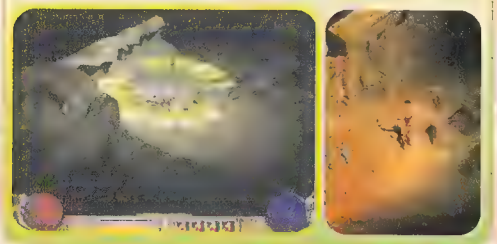
ROLE PLAYING ADVENTURE

One of the most eagerly anticipated games of all time is almost with us! Diablo brought role playing to the masses, with its easy to use controls and addictive gameplay, and Diablo 2 looks set to continue that tradition. With 4 separate acts spread across 4 CDs, 5 playable characters, a host of new spells, and an intricate plot with quests and sub quests to tackle, Diablo 2 is going to be a devil of a game.



TOMB RAIDER 4

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3D ADVENTURE

Once again Lara Croft is chest deep in trouble, as she uncovers an ancient prophecy regarding the alignment of the stars at the millennium, which surely spells trouble for the rest of the world. Lucky she's about really. Set entirely in Egypt, and shifting away from the gun blazing action of the last two instalments, The Last Revelation returns to the puzzle solving and exploration of the original, making for a more cerebral experience all round.

FORCE COMMANDER

STAR WARS 3D STRATEGY

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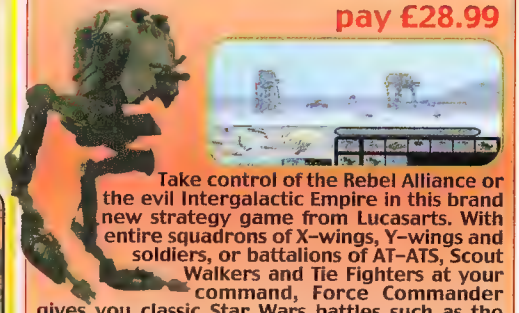

Take control of the Rebel Alliance or the evil Intergalactic Empire in this brand new strategy game from Lucasarts. With entire squadrons of X-wings, Y-wings and soldiers, or battalions of AT-ATS, Scout Walkers and Tie Fighters at your command, Force Commander gives you classic Star Wars battles such as the escape from Hoth and lets you fight them your way! With full 3D graphics and an advanced control system, Force Commander lets you really feel the force!

ROGUE SPEAR

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STRATEGY 3D SHOOTER

"Smart. Graphically revolutionary." PC Gamer

The Rainbow 6 team returns! Two deadly groups of international terrorists have formed an uneasy alliance in order to achieve even more insidious goals and the danger to the world's population is increased tenfold. 18 all new missions set in 16 locations will tax your tactical abilities as well as the speed of your trigger finger and the AI of both the team members and the enemy has been improved, creating an even more realistic and challenging feel. Full sniper support is included, plus a host of new weapons are available to help you assassinate your foes plus improved graphics, weather and explosion effects. Are you ready?

ALIEN CROSSFIRE!

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An official expansion pack for the smash hit Alpha Centauri, Alien Crossfire doubles the play value of the original game, with a host of new features.7 new factions are available to play, new technologies and projects are waiting to be discovered, and 32,000 units are at your disposal to aid you in your battle to crush your opponents. A must for strategy fans.

CODENAME EAGLE

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3D SHOOTER

Codename Eagle sees Russia attempting world domination in the early 1900's. You are Red and your task it is to infiltrate Russia and execute the Tsar. Featuring 12 huge missions, the game allows the player complete freedom of movement within each map and also affords you the unique ability to take control of a variety of land, sea and air vehicles in real time! JUST THINK OF

BIGGLES CROSSED WITH BONE AND [illegible] RE.

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

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SCI-FI HORROR ROLEPLAYING

"A SCI-FI HORROR MASTERPIECE"
95% PC ZONE

- Choose from 3 characters
- 14 weapons that you can modify, repair and upgrade with different ammo
- Find new ways to overcome the fiendish puzzles and adversaries
- Develop your chosen character as the story unfolds
- You are the victim not the hero
- CO-OP 4 player option

Set 40 years after the first game. The world was close to destruction as a result of a computer virus, the virus is back and more deadly. The atmosphere the game creates is one of extreme fear and tension. The intricate story has many subquests to occupy your attention, this allows for return visits to see what you missed the first time.

BATTLEZONE II

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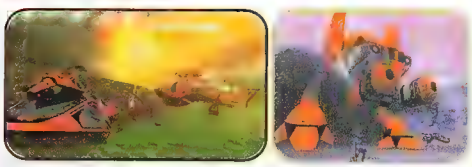
SCI-FI 3D STRATEGY



Battlezone 2 follows on from the original, with the USA and the USSR having joined forces to protect Pluto from an invading alien force. Keeping the brilliant gameplay from the original, the sequel adds increased 3D support, allowing for stunning terrain, with tunnels, bridges and more. New units are now at your command, and you can pilot any one of them, or travel on foot. With full strategy elements allowing you to create your base and units, and the immersive feeling of the 3D combat giving you total freedom to go wherever you want, Battlezone 2 is a classic in the making.

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The best selling football sim returns for its annual outing, with a whole host of improved features. New team strips and stats, updated graphics and all new music are just some of the many new additions to the popular series.

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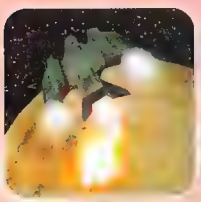

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SPACE COMBAT SIM

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Featuring an all new campaign with over 30 missions, 70 different space craft, a new in depth combat system, and a mission and scenario editor, Conflict Freespace 2 takes space combat gaming to a new dimension. With multiplayer dogfights, squad wars, and cooperative play, this is the closest you can get to a real star war.

GABRIEL KNIGHT 3

OCCULT ADVENTURE

THE WORLD FAMOUS SERIES RETURNS WITH A NEW GAME ENGINE

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The world famous series returns with an all new game engine. Now presented in stunning 3D, the game once again follows Gabriel Knight as he seeks out the truth of another bizarre mystery, set in rural France. With an atmospheric soundtrack, beautiful graphics and an engrossing storyline, Gabriel Knight 3 is not to be missed.

QUAKE 3 ARENA

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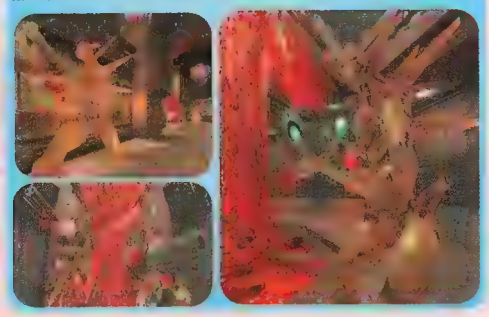
THE GODFATHER OF 1ST PERSON SHOOTERS

MORE QUAKE AND THIS TIME IT'S PURELY MULTI-PLAYER, OPTIMISED FOR MAXIMUM ENJOYMENT ACROSS THE INTERNET OF LAN



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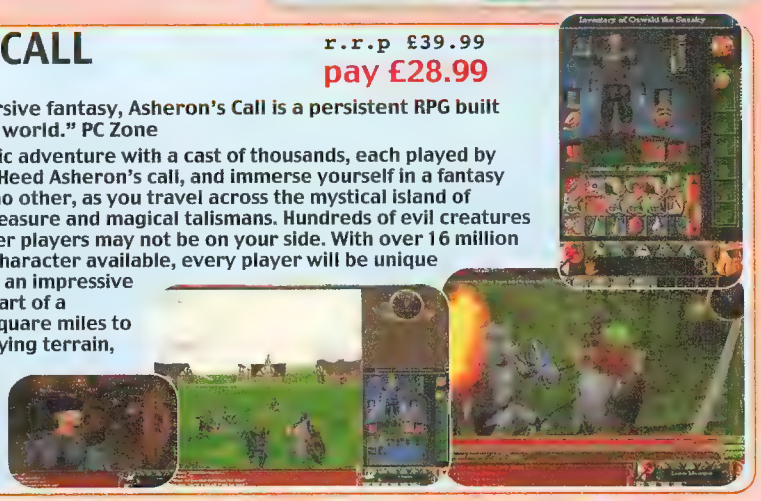
"The ultimate in immersive fantasy, Asheron's Call is a persistent RPG built around an evolving 3D world." PC Zone

ONLINE ONLY. Join an epic adventure with a cast of thousands, each played by another human player! Heed Asheron's call, and immerse yourself in a fantasy role playing game like no other, as you travel across the mystical island of Dereth, searching for treasure and magical talismans. Hundreds of evil creatures await you and even other players may not be on your side. With over 16 million visual combinations of character available, every player will be unique in appearance, creating an impressive feeling of really being part of a culture. With over 500 square miles to explore, with wildly varying terrain, thousands of spells to discover and the ability to help or hinder other players, Asheron's Call is set to change on line role playing forever.



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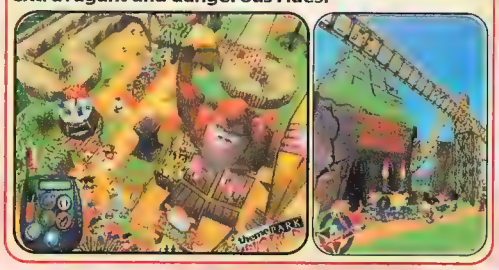
One of the best selling games of all time finally receives a long awaited sequel. Create the ultimate rollercoaster then ride it yourself in full 3D! Four different themes (eg Jungle) plus you can download additional attractions from themeparkworld.com. Keep your punters happy with ever more extravagant and dangerous rides!



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Imperium Galactica 2 combines the strategy of C&C and the building of Sim City, with full 3D combat in space and on land. Take control of one of 3 races each with a different goal in the campaign game, or play 8 player deathmatches against friends. With hours of FMV sequences to reward you for your success, Imperium Galactica 2 is a stellar experience.

INDIANA JONES 'THE INFERNAL MACHINE'

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3D ADVENTURE

The greatest adventurer in the world is back and on his most dangerous mission yet. Pieces of an ancient machine have been uncovered by the Russians, and they plan to use its incredible power for their own nefarious means. Once again it falls to Indy to don his Fedora hat and trusty bullwhip, and try and keep one step ahead of the vile communists. A globe trotting adventure of epic proportions, The Infernal Machine could be the trickiest challenge that Dr. Jones has ever faced.

PHARAOH

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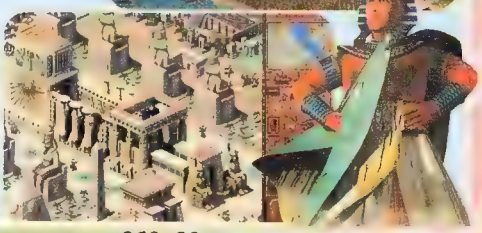
STRATEGY

"The different civilisation brings new challenges. The latest god sim from Impressions and sure-fire contender for best strategy game of 1999." PC Zone

Travel back in time to the greatest civilisation of all, the Egyptian Pharoahs. As a great Pharoah, you must build your town into a beautiful city, filled with pyramids, monuments and temples. Ensure that the layout is easy to use for your denizens, and they will be happy, and the city will prosper, growing greater and more luxurious. Create a maze of streets and alleys, and the citizens will become confused, meaning that water and food supplies become lost. Manage your resources well, build ever more impressive structures, and try to tame the Nile, and perhaps you too will become as powerful as the Pharoahs.



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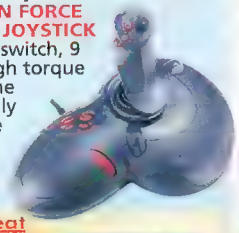

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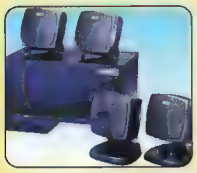

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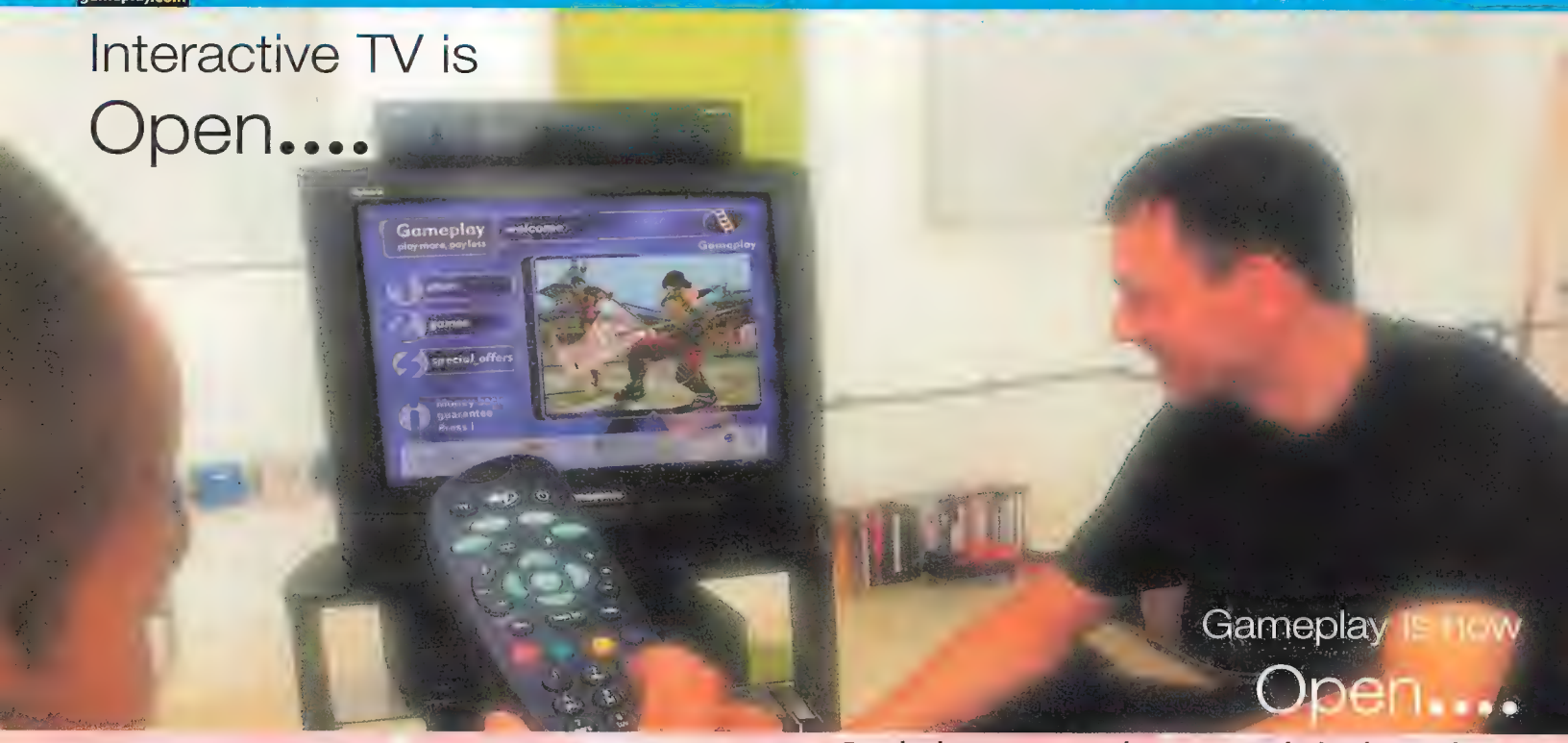

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PC ZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyers guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates.

This is the new PC Zone Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

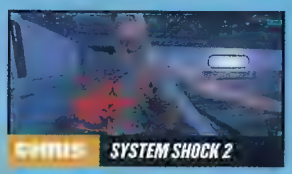
BENCHMARK GAME Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the PC Zone team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent, check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month that are often better than some of the games in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100, and a lesser title will drop out to make room for it.

BUDGET If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily recieve a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply, it is up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth purchasing at its new price point.

GAME OF THE MOMENT

These are the games currently residing on *our* hard drives


CHRIS: SYSTEM SHOCK 2

DAVE: UNREAL TOURNAMENT

RICHIE: IMPERIUM GALACTICA II

[illegible]: SWAT 3

PC ZONE CLASSIC

Under the new Zone scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights, and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. As you can see from the PC Zone hall of fame on page 65, there are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as PC Zone classics. This trend wiill continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all Zone Classics are must-have titles (the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre), but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. We consider all recommended titles to be excellent examples of their genre, and you should only dismiss them if the subject matter is not to your taste. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone who likes that particular genre. There will not be many of them. When we say a game is a classic, we mean it!

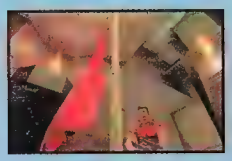
FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

PCZ #71 • 95%

✪ It's over a year old, but that doesn't detract from the fact that *Half-Life* is still probably the best game you can install on your PC. Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100



UNREAL TOURNAMENT — PCZ #81 • 90%

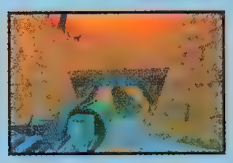
✪ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake II*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

ALIENS VS PREDATOR — PCZ #77 • 87%

✪ It might not be the best, but it's definitely the scariest FPS you can buy. *Aliens vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast this provides excellent value for money.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549 442



QUAKE II: QUAD DAMAGE — PCZ #59 • 86%

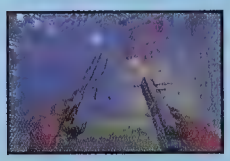
✪ The sequel to 'the most important PC game ever' turns out to be more than worth the wait. Single player might be a let-down, but if you've got access to a network or fast Internet connection you'll be in heaven. Now available as a pack with all the official mission packs.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 700

THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT — PCZ #72 • 84%

✪ Forget about going in with all guns blazing. *Thief* is set in medieval times and the object of the game is to fill your pockets with treasure without being caught. The fact that the guards can hear you coming means that you've got to learn new tactics to get out alive.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOUR DIVISION — PCZ #71 • 81%

✪ Half *Quake*, half *MechWarrior*, this game breathes fresh air into a stale genre. Great graphics and an involving storyline, its only faults are iffy AI and the fact that it's a bit too easy for hardcore *Quake* fans.

PUBLISHER Microids • 00331 4601 5401

KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME — PCZ #77 • 80%

✪ This controversial title should be talked about for its excellent gameplay and graphics rather than its violence and swearing. Because, quite frankly, that side of the game was s***. We still stand by the game though - it's "classic adult entertainment."

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

SIN — PCZ #70 • 80%

✪ Releasing *Sin* at the same time as the vastly superior *Half-Life* was commercial suicide. But you can now bag this title for less than a tenner, which gives you the perfect excuse to find out just how good it actually is. No classic, but an excellent game in its own right.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

JEDI KNIGHT / MYSTERIES OF THE SITH — PCZ #74 • 77%

✪ As a double pack, this ageing 3D shooter and its expansion disc represents outstanding value for money. Dated graphics, but the level design is superb and the missions are some of the best ever made.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01895 4567000

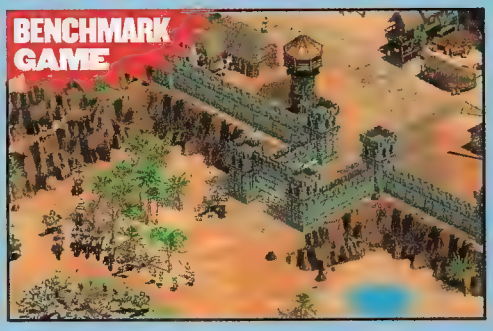
REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL — PCZ #77 • 75%

✪ It might have a daft storyline, but playing an angel sent down to rid the Earth of the fallen gives you the perfect excuse to indulge in a spot of angelic mayhem. When challenged, just say that "God told you to do it." And smile benignly.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 0181 844 9000

REAL-TIME STRATEGY

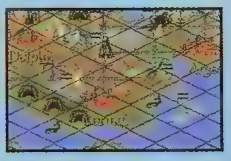
AGE OF EMPIRES II



PCZ #84 • 90%

✪ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age 2*, gameplay has been honed to perfect with balanced units, and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tib Sun* and enjoy this classic RTS instead.

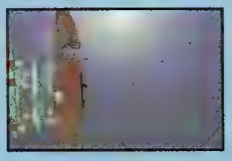
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 00 2000



CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME — PCZ #00 • 89%

✪ A game that lives up to its name, *Civ II* is probably the oldest game in the Top 100 that will still be around in years to come. Turn-based and 2D, it offers unlimited replayability and depth. One of the few games that everyone should own.

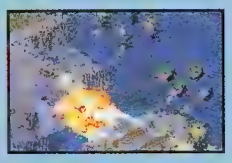
PUBLISHER Hasbro • 0181 569 1234



HOMEWORLD — PCZ #82 • 85%

✪ *Homeworld* delivers the dream of millions of PC strategists the world over: a fully three-dimensional strategic experience. The vast expanse of space is the battleground, the hundreds of ships at your command the weapon, and the only limits are your imagination.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



C&C: TIBERIAN SUN — PCZ #81 • 82%

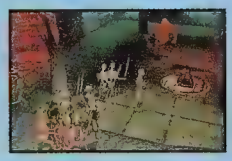
✪ Perhaps not as stunning as one might have hoped after a three-year wait, *Tiberian Sun* is nevertheless a truly great game. Pushing the *Command & Conquer* genre to its limits, it offers PC strategists immense depth, detail and variety.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

TOTAL ANNIHILATION — PCZ #56 • 82%

✪ With a ridculous number of units and unrivalled pace, the original *TA* still stands head and shoulders above more recent efforts. No story to speak of and weak singleplayer, but still, for a tenner, no-one should be without a copy.

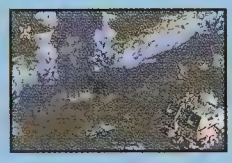
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



DUNGEON KEEPER 2 — PCZ #79 • 81%

✪ *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea. *DK2* takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and takes the excellent concept introduced by its predecessor to the next dimension.

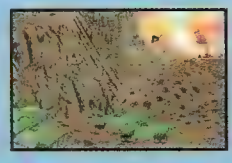
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



STARCRAFT — PCZ #64 • 80%

✪ Still one of the most popular games online, *StarCraft* offered three distinct races and one of the most involving stories yet seen in real-time strategy. It may look a bit old nowadays, but it runs like a dream if your still doggedly hanging on to your P90.

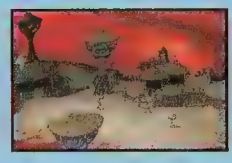
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



WARZONE 2100 — PCZ #75 • 78%

✪ The first proper 3D real-time strategy game to actually be any good, this sci-fi effort offered almost unlimited variety thanks to a semi-dynamic campiagn and masses of research. Might take some getting used to, but it's worth the effort.

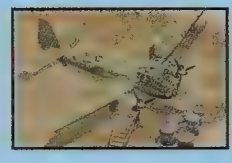
PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING — PCZ #70 • 75%

✪ The original *Populous* was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Now Peterless, the new Bullfrog team show that they can do just as well without him.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



COMMANDOS BATTLE PACK — PCZ #66 • 72%

✪ Combining *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* and its mission pack *Beyond The Call Of Duty*, this double pack of WWII tactical combat is as hard as nails. It's also very original, incredibly varied and monstrously addictive.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

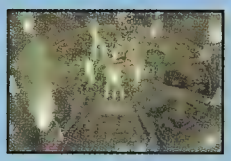
ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 93%

✪ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* mixes role playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are. In short, it's a title that's absolutely indispensable.

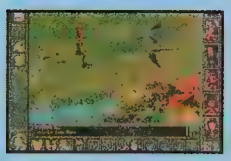
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549 442



FINAL FANTASY VII — PCZ #66 • 88%

✪ Fearsomely addictive gem of a game of truly epic proportions. Great graphics, plenty of hidden surprises and massive levels will keep you totally absorbed if you forgive the risible dialogue and turn-based combat.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive •0181 636 3000



BALDUR'S GATE — PCZ #73 • 85%

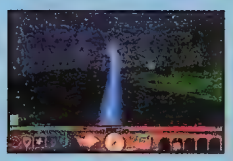
✪ With every developer 'going 3D' these days, it's refreshing to find an old-school RPG that combines traditional D&D role-playing with sumptuous 2D graphics. *Baldur's Gate* is intelligent and involving in equal measures.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

FALLOUT 2 — PCZ #71 • 83%

✪ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you like the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



LANDS OF LORE III — PCZ #74 • 80%

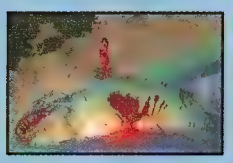
✪ Westwood know how to tell a good story, and this latest in the series is the best of the lot. Combine that with ease of use and some highly polished artwork, and you'll find *LOLIII* a great alternative to more traditional RPG efforts.

PUBLISHER Westwood/EA • 01753 549442

DIABLO — PCZ #48 • 78%

✪ Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game. A budget bargain.

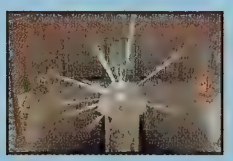
PUBLISHER Zablac/Blizzard • 01626 332233



REVENANT — PCZ #84 • 78%

✪ Imagine a blend of *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate* and you've got Revenant. It might have a trite and cliched storyline, but that doesn't detract from a highly competent role-playing game, with real-time combat and refined graphics.

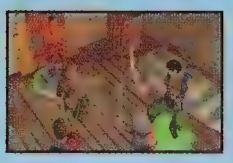
PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



SILVER — PCZ #75• 75%

✪ If you've finished *Final Fantasy VII* and you're looking for more of the same, *Silver* could fit the bill. Excellent combat and some truly spectacular spells help disguise the fact that it hasn't got an ounce of the imagination that makes the *FF* games so good.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199



RETURN TO KRONDOR — PCZ #76 • 72%

✪ It wasn't worth the five year wait, but *Return to Krondor* is an entertaining romp nevertheless. The turn-based combat is well executed and the gaming environment is huge, involving and atmospheric. Cool music as well...

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

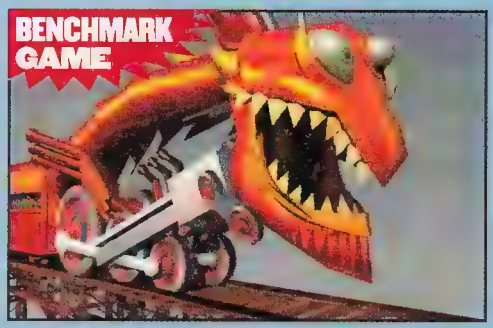
DARKSTONE — PCZ #85 • 70%

✪ *Darkstone* starts off inauspiciously, but persevere and things start getting a lot better. Masses of spells and skills brighten up a reasonably attractive landscape, and we don't think you can ask for much more than that. Can you?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549 442

ACTION / ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO



PCZ #71 • 90%

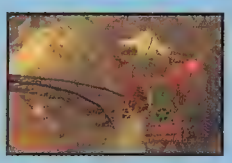
✪ If you've followed LucasArts through *Monkey Island, Sam and Max*, and *Day of the Tentacle* this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 0171 368 2255

DISCWORLD NOIR — PCZ #79 • 89%

✪ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games, and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Pratchett's off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE — PCZ #84• 88%

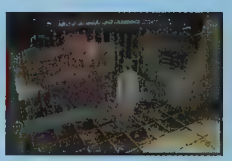
✪ LucasArts move away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for the latest Indy outing. Thankfully the adventure elements are still in place in this whip-cracking romp.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

THE NOMAD SOUL — PCZ #83 • 87%

✪ Distinctly odd, but also refreshingly original, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and (gulp) David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambituous and almost pulls it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



NOCTURNE — PCZ #84 • 86%

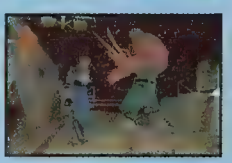
✪ Why would you pay good money to be scared? Because it's damn good fun that's why, and if you find the average PC game laughable then we dare you to sit through *Nocturne* with your curtains drawn. It's a beautiful exercise in computer-generated fear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 • 01753 722 900

TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION — PCZ#83 85%

✪ Lara's back in her fourth (and best) adventure so far. More moves, better looks, intricate puzzles and a well-developed plot. It's not going to win over the cynics but it's still a damn fine game.

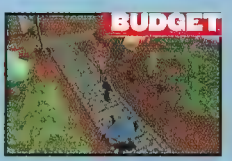
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



RESIDENT EVIL II — PCZ #75 • 82%

✪ Not quite as attractive as it could have been, *Resident Evil II* remains one of the most tensely gripping adventure games of recent years. A modicum of simple puzzles, offset by liberal and gratuitous gore make for top entertainment.

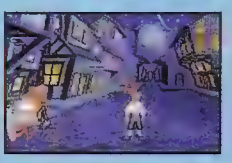
PUBLISHER Virgin • 0171 368 2255



LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY — PCZ #54 • 80%

✪ Twinsen is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmers in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area in *LBA 2*, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great-looking and hugely atmospheric adventure. A must for adventure fans.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



MONKEY ISLAND BOUNTY PACK — PCZ #74 • 80%

✪ *Monkey Island 1* and *2* are perhaps the finest point-and-clickers ever to grace the PC. The third outing may have been disappointing, but it would be a sin to exclude it from this excellent triple pack.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 4567000

SAM & MAX AND DAY OF THE TENTACLE — NOT REVIEWED• 78%

✪ Two of the finest adventure games in the world, ever, are now avaialable in a single pack for a bargain price. They still match most titles that are released today so go and buy them. Now.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 45670

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCCREA RALLY

PCZ #68 • 91%

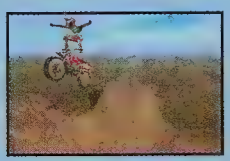
✪ Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McCrea* is still the benchmark in rally simulations. Realistic handling, car customisation and stacks of multiplayer options keep it ahead of the competition. The fact that it's now available as a budget title makes it an absolute steal.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814 132

MIDTOWN MADNESS — PCZ #79 • 89%

✪ Drive around Chicago participating in races, annoying the police, or just cruising around. Not quite *Grand Theft Auto 3D*, but just as much fun, this this is the best all-out arcade racer you can currently buy on PC.

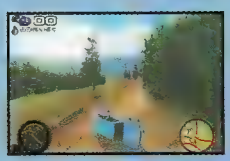
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



MOTOCROSS MADNESS — PCZ #67 • 85%

✪ An astoundingly addictive game. Loads of game and race options and tremendous fun, especially when played with a Microsoft Freestyle Pro pad over a network. Available with the pad for around 50 quid. A must-buy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 • 82%

✪ Close but no *McCrea*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855 015

TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 82%

✪ Predictably, Codemasters have done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrol heads. Graphically it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it most certainly is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MONACO GRAND PRIX — PCZ #69 • 81%

✪ Essentially this is *F1 Racing Simulation 2*, and an F1 fan's wet dream come true. It looks beautiful, plays even better, and the AI is second to none. You need a hefty machine to have it looking its best though.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 081 944 9000

DRIVER — PCZ #82 • 80%

✪ Criticised for lacking the depth of *Midtown Madness* (this is a PLayStation conversion after all), this is still a good game. A pumping 70's soundtrack helps to recreate that Starsky and Hutch feeling. A wheel, an afro haircut and a false mustache are of course essential.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

SEGA RALLY 2 — PCZ #84 • 79%

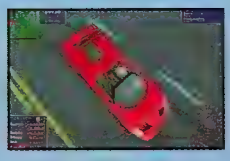
✪ Not as good as hooking up with five of your mates down the local arcade, but this is a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car round the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this much fun?

PUBLISHER Sega • 0181 995 3399

CARMAGEDDON II — PCZ #69 • 77%

✪ It's *that* game again, this time with full 3D pedestrians. More blood, more cars, more tracks – and now with added missions. If you liked the first one, you'll love this one. If you don't, you can just bog off.

PUBLISHER SCI • 0171 585 3308



NEED FOR SPEED: RC — PCZ #80 • 76%

✪ *Need for Speed* fans will have their wants fully satisfied with *Road Challenge*, the latest addition to the series. The real clincher for driving games is their feel, and this one feels so good it's obscene. Not a revolutionary leap in the series but definitely the best one.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

FALCON 4

PCZ #72 • 92%

✪ We waited patiently for years, and for once we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* sports beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing. If you're going to buy one flight sim, make it this one. You won't be disappointed.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893 893

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 • 89%

✪ This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece is perhaps a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this one.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A 18E SUPER HORNET — PCZ #83 • 88%

✪ If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big huge capital R, then look no further. In fact this game is so lifelike, the US Navy have adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. Watch out for friendly fire.

PUBLISHER Titus Software • 0171 700 2119

MIG ALLEY — PCZ #80 • 87%

✪ *MiG Alley* gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't be put off. If you're willing to put in the work, it will repay you with excellent in-flight graphics and brilliant mission planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

APACHE HAVOC — PCZ #73 • 87%

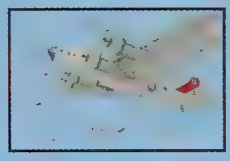
✪ Of the three main chopper sims available, *Longbow 2* is the one if you're a hard-core sim head, *Team Apache* is the choice for fans whose preference swings the other way, and *Apache Havoc* straddles the gap. And the graphics are to die for.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III — PCZ #82 • 86%

✪ For all those who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than an excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this is (along with the *Flight Sim* series) an object of worship and devotion. It deserves high praise.

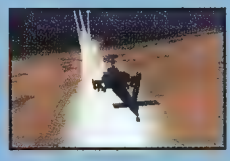
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



JANE'S WORLD WAR II FIGHTERS — PCZ #72 • 83%

✪ It's been a fierce dogfight to see who rules the WWII flight sim skies. *Jane's* combines realism with accessibility and ease, and although the game doesn't have a dynamic campaign feature, its graphics make it a clear winner.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



LONGBOW 2 — PCZ #59 • 82%

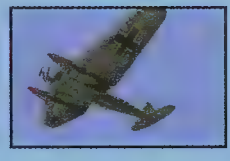
✪ "*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," we said in our review. If you don't have any extra graphics hardware, there's only one thing to do – think 'upgrade', 'upgrade' and 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

FLIGHT SIM 98 — PCZ #55 • 75%

✪ The Microsoft series is probably the most popular and expandable flight sim range. This update adds two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and hugely impressive 3D acceleration. Check out the review of the *2000* update on page 92.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



EUROPEAN AIR WAR — PCZ #71 • 73%

✪ Variety is the spice of life, and WWII-based *EAW* offers more than 20 different aircraft to pilot. Not only that, but it can handle up to 256 planes in the air at any one time, which makes it a marginally less dangerous place to fly than Heathrow at 10.30 in the morning.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893 893

SPORTS

FIFA 2000

PCZ #84 • 88%

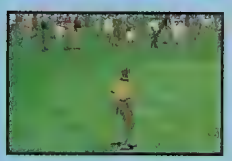
The *FIFA* franchise has been rolling on for years, and it gets better each time. It missed a classic rating by a whisker but it's still the best conversion of the finest sport known to man. If you're into your football then you should own *FIFA 2000*. It's as simple as that.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549 442

NBA: INSIDE DRIVE — PCZ #82 • 83%

While not exactly the most popular sport in this country, *Inside Drive* manages to suck you in with its supreme playability. Its presentation is not quite up to EA standards (what is?), but when the gameplay is this good, who cares?

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF — PCZ #80 • 82%

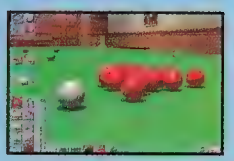
Knocking *Links* off the office golfing perch is no mean feat, but *PGA*'s gameplay is so addictive all other contenders can tee off. Our very own Keith Pullin took the entire summer off to design his own courses for it. But he has got a hole in one in the head.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

VIRTUAL POOL 2 — PCZ #58 • 82%

Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.

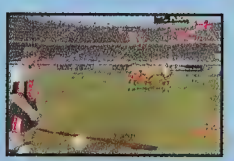
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 42366600



JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2 — PCZ #68 • 81%

The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates, and when you're tired of the baize you can move round and have a go on the fully featured darts board instead. Saves going down the Working Men's Club

PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive • 0171 368 2255



ACTUA SOCCER 3 — PCZ #72 • 80%

If you can't get on with *FIFA* then *Actua* is the second port of call for footie fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which helps to maintain its shelf life.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

BRIAN LARA CRICKET — PCZ #75 • 78%

Cricket isn't the easiest game to convert to the PC but Codemasters have done the best job, despite the fact that *Brian* has obviously been ported straight over from the PlayStation. For aspiring country-dwellers everywhere.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814 132

NHL 2000 — PCZ #83 • 77%

EA's hockey series has improved graphics and AI, fast-paced addictive gameplay and you can now graft your digitised face onto a player, then watch it beaten with a stick to a bloody pulp. Now that's family entertainment.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER 2000 — PCZ #00 • 77%

Microsoft's previous attempt at a footie game was so woefully bad we still can't talk about it without falling over laughing. They got the message and drafted in Rage for this worthwhile effort. It's no *FIFA* and it's a division below *Actua* but it's still a laugh to play.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

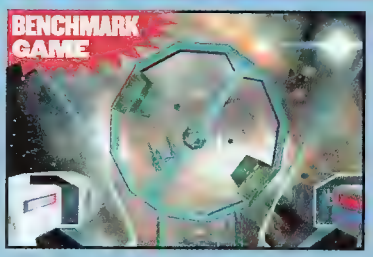
UEFA CHAMPION'S LEAGUE — PCZ #76 • 72%

Grab a license and attach a game for instant profit. It didn't work with *Michael Owen's World League Soccer*, but Eidos made more of an impact with this update. There are better football games (just look up the list), but this is the only one that lets you take on Europe's elite.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER



PCZ #82 • 89%

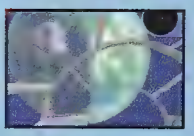
The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany where you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. Deeply hypnotic and beatiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ• 01483 767 656

FREESPACE 2 — PCZ #84 • 85%

Completely different from *X*, *Freespace 2* is fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. A superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay• 0171 551 4222



X WING: ALLIANCE — PCZ #77 • 83%

At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in this t he final episode in the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision• 01895 456 700

PRIVATEER 2 — PCZ #44 • 80%

Not as open-ended as *Elite*, but far more rewarding as an overall experience. Great graphics even today, and hey it's on budget so it's better value for money than ever.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts• 01753 549 442

WING COMMANDER PROPHECY GOLD — PCZ #59 • 77%

The graphics look a bit dated now, but this is still a great game by anyones's standards. *Wing* neophytes start here.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts• 01753 549 442

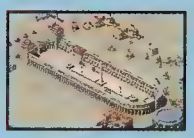
MANAGEMENT

CM 99/2000

PCZ #84 • 92%

More than a game… it's a way of life. So say fans of the best football management game in existence. If you dare to play it you can kiss goodbye to your social life, and expect to spend hours each and every day poring over unknown players in a bid to discover the next Ronaldo. The word benchmark doesn't really describe how much better than the competition this game is.

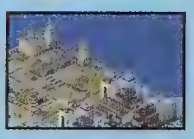
PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



CAESAR III — PCZ #70 • 88%

Starting from scratch you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.

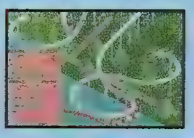
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



SIMCITY 3000 — PCZ #74 • 85%

Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and newbies alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON — PCZ #75 • 83%

Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden 'dippers, to Nemesis-style white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive and satisfyingly simple.

PUBLISHER Hasbro • 0181 569 1234

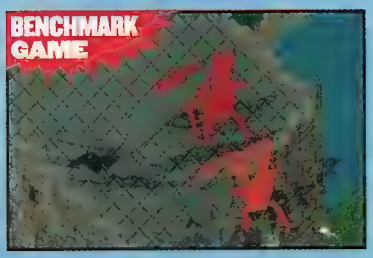
PREMIER MANAGER 99 — PCZ #76 • 80%

It's no *Champ Manager*, but this is the only other football management game on the PC worth bothering about. Decent graphics set it apart from Eidos' masterpiece but *PM99* doesn't have the depth or detail.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

ONLINE ONLY

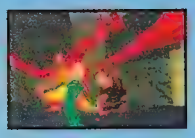
ULTIMA ONLINE



PCZ #80 • 92%

✪ In many ways an old-school RPG, but with amazing freedom, depth and open-endedness. So addictive that *ZONE* editor Chris has sold his car, his house and his soul to finance a permanent Web connection. The best thing about *Ultima Online* is that your world is constantly changing and evolving, and it's populated by real people, just like you.

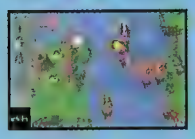
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549 442



EVERQUEST — PCZ #80 • 85%

✪ If you find *Ultima Online* too vast, *EverQuest* may be the online RPG for you. It's far more combat-orientated than *Ultima*, and more linear as a result. Repetitive at higher levels but worth checking out all the same.

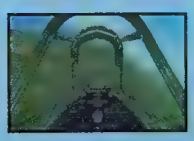
PUBLISHER Sony (sold at Electronic Boutique only • 0171 46376377911)



NETSTORM — PCZ #59 • 73%

✪ A curious blend of chess, *Red Alert* and Baron Munchausen, *NetStorm* is also an elegant and addictive multiplayer game that works beautifully across a standard modem.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 700



WARBIRDS — PCZ #70 • 72%

✪ The original WWII on-line dogfighting sim and still one of the best.With over 48 different aircraft to chose from, this should keep anyone with a passing interest in air combat very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Interactive Magic • 01344 409399

DAWN OF ACES — PCZ #77 • 70%

✪ Not entirely dissimilar to *Warbirds*, but set in WWI. Not as fast or as hectic which some might say is a good thing. We happen to like our action hectic and that's why we gave *Dawn* a lower score. That's life bud.

PUBLISHER Interactive Magic • 01344 409399

3D ACTION / STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

PCZ #79 • 91%

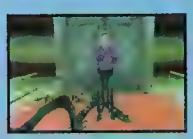
✪ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that's come closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. From the very first mission, it grabs you by the balls and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722 900

BATTLEZONE 2 — PCZ #84 • 87%

✪ Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.

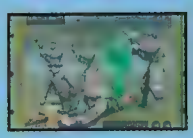
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 700



ROGUE SPEAR — PCZ #84 • 86%

✪ We loved *Rainbow Six* and although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722 900



SPEC OPS 2 — PCZ #84 • 84%

✪ Challenging *Hidden & Dangerous* for the top spot, Spec Ops 2 puts you in charge of a four man green beret squad intent on staying alive and shooting the enemy in the head. Incredibly realistic, with top-notch sound.

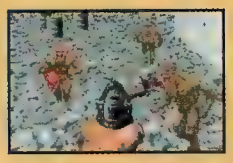
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722 900

WARGASM — PCZ #71 • 80%

✪ Famed for their flight sims, DID finally delivered an action game only they could produce. With helicopters, APCs, and hapless infantry running about, this is as fast-paced as a tank game could be.

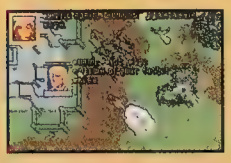
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS



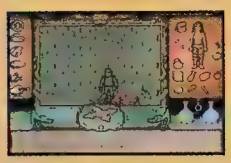
DOOM

✪ This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or (gulp) *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.



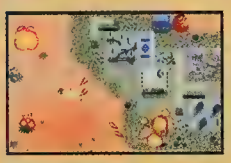
ULTIMA VII

✪ Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat but the gameplay isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.



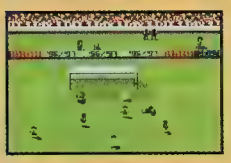
ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

✪ We reviewed this game back in the very first issue of PC Zone. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit outdated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.



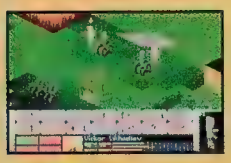
DUNE II

✪ If you know your strategy you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than a lot of new titles is testament to its staying power.



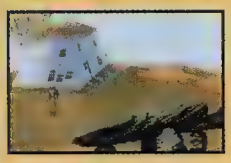
SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

✪ EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that Sensible Soccer was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.



UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

✪ This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles, and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever on its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

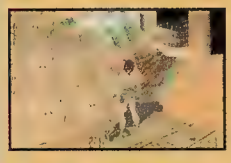


MAGIC CARPET

✪ Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games released in the early days of 3D. So original in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

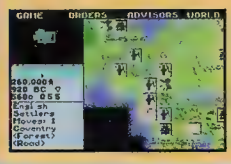
WING COMMANDER

✪ The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so successful, they made a film. Inevitably this was absolute rubbish and people stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?



TOMB RAIDER

✪ She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?



CIVILIZATION

✪ The original, and some say best turn-based strategy game. When *Civ* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

ON THE CD

This month's exclusives include *Messiah* and *Indy Jones*, to name but two

WORDS Mark Hill DISCMEISTER Daniel Emery

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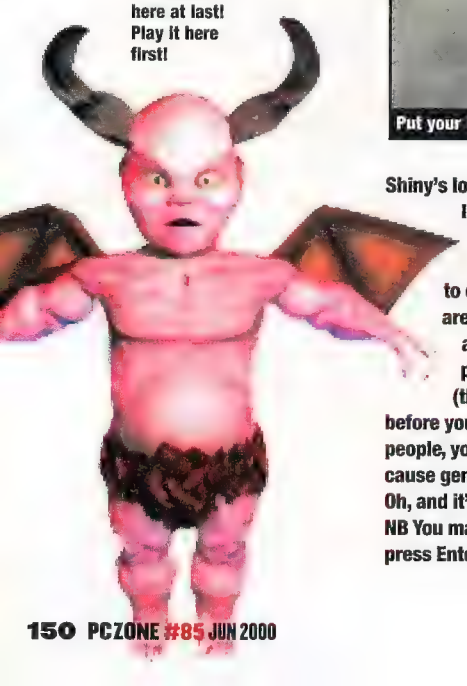
CD-ROM HELP Phone ABT on 01708 250250 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, **or email pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk**. Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.

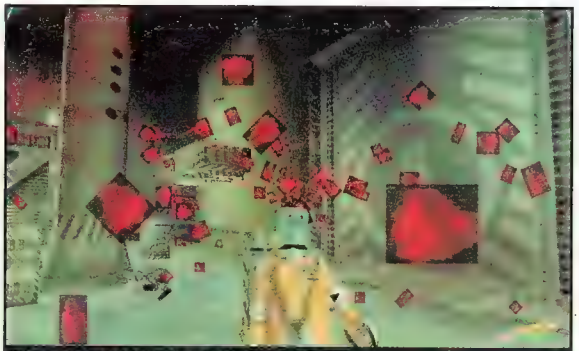


Messiah is here at last! Play it here first!

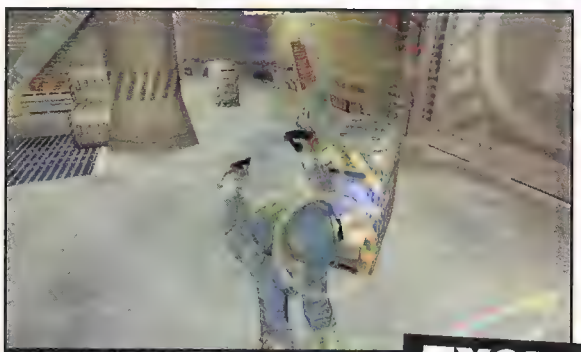
DEMOS + SHAREWARE

MESSIAH

Virgin



The man is just bursting with ideas. Or something.



Put your hands on the screen! Be saved!

Oi! You can't kill an angel!

EXCLUSIVE

Shiny's long awaited game is finally here for you to play. Controlling a cute little cherub may not be everyone's idea of a good time, but keep in mind that the whole point of the game is to possess other people's bodies. You start off this demo in a body already, but you might need to change it if you want to progress. Certain characters have access to areas you wouldn't otherwise be able to reach, others have unique abilities or can use certain weapons. So, while it's less a puzzle/interaction game and more of a brainy platform/shoot 'em up (these guys brought us *MDK*, remember), you always have to think before you act. Of course, if thinking is something you'd rather leave to other people, you're more than welcome to beat the crap out of anyone you meet and cause general havoc on a massive scale. We know you're no angel, after all. Oh, and it's 3D card only.

NB You may experience problems running this demo. If a black screen appears, press Enter and wait a few minutes, the demo should load up properly then.

Controls:	Mouse/keyboard
ARROWS	Move
Z/X	Strafe left/right
CTRL	Flap wings/Jump
Backspace	Unpossess a Character
	Spacebar/LFT MOUSE Combat mode/Fire Weapon
Num Pad +/-	Zoom in/out of sniper mode
Shift+Arrow	Walk
Enter	Current Action
Insert	Crawl/Crouch
Caps Lock	Look behind character
P	Toggle pause game
Esc	In-game menu
Right Mouse	Free look in third person Perspective

Indy gets his films confused. Is this Jaws, Piranha or The Last Crusade?

You'd have thought his BO would be enough to drive them off.

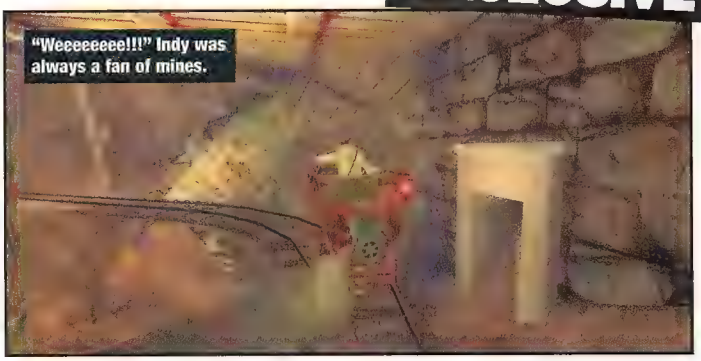
INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

Activision

EXCLUSIVE

Find out what all the fuss regarding Indy's new adventure is about and how it compares to Lara's latest revelations. And before you start grumbling that "It's not the right voice", check out Indy's whip for some swinging action. There's no animal (well, mammal anyway) shooting, but those Ruskies are just waiting to take the lead. Because you don't have to spend bloody ages timing every jump to perfection, you can actually take the time to think about the puzzles and take in the vast levels. Oh, and a 3D card is required.

Controls:	Mouse/keyboard/gamepad
ARROWS	Move
SHIFT + ARROWS	Run
A/S	Step left/right
Z + ARROWS	Roll
ALT	Jump
CTRL	Pick/push/shoot
NUM PAD 0	Look
M	Map
C	Crawl
L	Lighter
1-9	Weapons



"Weeeeeeee!!!" Indy was always a fan of mines.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

GT Interactive

The release of this title has experienced an unbelievable amount of delays, but play the demo and you'll see it's been worth the wait. How it will fare against *Quake III* in the sales deathmatch is something we'll have to wait to find out, but there's no doubting the absolute class of this title. For the first time you can play against genuinely realistic bots, ranging from novices to godlike experts. Whether you play solo or against friends, remember that the emphasis here is on pure, unadulterated fun. The graphics are colourful, the gameplay is frantic and the levels are extremely well designed. And you just haven't lived until you blow the top off someone's head from a great distance using the sniper rifle.

Mouse:	Mouse/keyboard
ARROWS	Move
SHIFT	Walk
CTRL/SPACE	jump
ALT	Fire
1-0	Weapons
A/D	Strafe left/right

Sniping mode in action.

Demo of the year? Could well be.

This chap mistakenly cast a spell that caused the demo to be caught in a time warp which...

TA: KINGDOMS

EXCLUSIVE

GT Interactive

It's been a bloody long time coming, but the *TA: Kingdoms* demo is finally here. Opinion is still divided on this one, so if you haven't already spent your pennies you can find out on which side of the divide you are. We still rate the first *Total Annihilation* as one of the best real-time strategies ever made, so the name itself is enough to command the respect of even the most cynical of gamers. This time around though, the setting's feet are firmly on fantasy ground with mana and magic featuring quite heavily. The units' animation is excellent (just watch those dragon wings flap) and the spell effects are dazzling. And if you don't believe us, take a look yourself.

Controls: Mouse

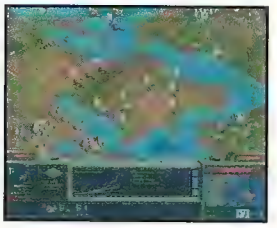
FIFA 2000: A Millennium Prayer. Oh, God.

FIFA 2000

EA Sports

You can't have Christmas without a new *FIFA* game, so it's just as well as they keep getting better and better. This time, not only are the graphics greatly improved, there's a new control that allows you to keep players off you. This means that, for the first time, you can actually stop, think who you're passing to and build up nice (rather than frantic) moves. This demo pitches American sides, Galaxy and DC United (they might as well be Mars and Saturn) in a duel to the death. Well, to the most goals, anyway. Oh, and don't forget it also features *that* Robbie William's song.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad

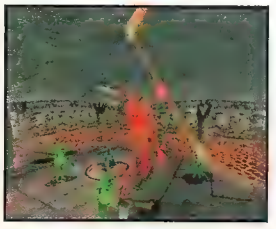


SID MEIER'S ALIEN CROSSFIRE

Electronic Arts

Alien Crossfire is the new add-on pack for the brilliant *Alpha Centauri*, the futuristic take on *Civilization*. This time there are seven new factions to contend with and, as the title suggests, some none-too-friendly alien folk. As usual, you can choose between diplomacy and fighting, depending on your disposition. There are also plenty of new projects, technologies and weapons to play around with. This demo only allows you to play as a human, but we look forward to playing the part of the little green men when the full version is released.

Controls: Mouse



DUNGEON KEEPER 2

Electronic Arts

Dungeon Keeper had one of the best, most original ideas we've ever come across: build your own evil dungeon and kill the heroes. The sequel improves on the original with fantastic 3D graphics (you can now zoom right into the action) and a very easy interface to get to grips with. Because the approach is so tongue in cheek and it refuses to take itself too seriously, we can guarantee hours of fun. You can even do an evil laugh each and every time the knight in shining armour gets slaughtered by your minions. Especially if you're slightly insane.

Controls: Mouse

CLOSE COMBAT IV

Mindscape

Real-time strategy has its own brand of hardcore games that the vast majority of C&C fans would be too scared to approach, and the *Close Combat* series is one of them. Subtitled *The Battle Of The Bulge* (no jokes please, we're all adults – well, some of us are anyway), the fourth instalment offers more World War II

ADDED EXTRAS

ON THE CD

Check out this month's selection of tools and utilities

DirectX 7.0
Microsoft's latest drivers for most Windows 95/98 games.

TreeSize Professional v2.2
A powerful and flexible hard disk manager.

EZDesk 1.8
Saves the position of your Windows 95/98 desktop shortcuts and folders.

Hypersnap-DX Pro v3.41.00
The latest screen-capture utility, which can cope with DirectX/Direct 3D and 3Dfx modes.

Scitech Display Doctor v6.53
The latest release of the universal graphics card utility.

Winzip 7.0
The ultimate zip utility for Windows.

Ameol v2.52
Brand new software for the excellent online service that is CIX.

Kali95 1.68
Latest version of the client software for playing games over the Internet.

GetRight 4.1.1
Salvage broken downloads. New version.

ICQ 99b beta v 3.19 Build #2569
Client software for the best online chat service in the world.

GameSpy 2.17
Find all the latest servers that are playing your favourite games.

MPlayer
Excellent free online gaming software.

DUN Manager 1.2c
Simplify and enhance Dial-Up Networking and Remote Access Terminal.

FTP Explorer 1.0010
Explorer-type FTP interface.

Roger Wilco Mk1.1a
A virtual walkie-talkie app that runs alongside your favourite multiplayer online games.

McAfee VirusScan 4.0
Top-selling virus protection. Like a condom for your PC.

PowerToys
Useful add-ons for your Desktop.

Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.0
Read Adobe documents with the latest version. Very useful for colourful manuals.

Frees UK
Sign-up files for this free ISP.

mIRC 5.6
Latest version of the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) software.

tactical blood 'n' guts to indulge in.
Controls: Mouse

FLANKER 2.0
SSI

Yet more flight stimulation for all you frustrated pilots out there. As with *Super Hornet*, you need some experience before jumping into the cockpit of this particular mighty beast. Everybody else should run and take cover. But then you probably already know that. Yes, you, the one that sits in front of the screen for ten minutes before he's figured out how to turn the engine on. Not that we've got the faintest idea. But you could have a look at the readme file. This game requires a 3D card.

Controls: Joystick/keyboard

JANE'S USAF
Electronic Arts

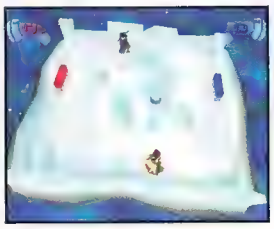
My, my, those armchair pilots are well catered for this month, aren't they? We could pretend that this is the latest edition of Jane Fonda's fitness video, where she shows us how to properly chew a banana without dentures and ten exercises you can do without breathing. But it's not. In fact, it's a very good flight sim set in the American airforce that let's you fly modern day missions and old Vietnam ones (so you can see what a pig's ear they made of it all).

Controls: Joystick/keyboard

THE F.A. PREMIER LEAGUE STARS
Electronic Arts

While not in the same league as *FIFA*, *Stars* has a charm all of its own. This is largely due to the innovative points system where you can improve your players just as if they were half-elfs in a medieval fantasy RPG, but with more heading skills. The action in this demo features some real stars, some of them English, as Chelsea take on Manchester United.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard



PONG
Atari

This is a game that is featured in almost every issue of *PC ZONE*. You don't believe us? Just take a look at the Q&As in the preview section and see how many developers mention it as the first game they ever played.. Now updated with colourful graphics (and even 3D acceleration), This demo has two boards: one with penguins and one with footballers. We can hear old-timers turning in their as yet undug graves but, pay no attention, this is tremendous fun.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard
ARROWS Move bat
ENTER Power-up

TRAINERS

Each month *PC ZONE* will be bringing you the Top Ten trainers available. However, Trainers are unofficial thirdparty programs and there is a chance they could screw up your games, mess your machine up, etc...

Army Men: Toys In Space
Anno 1602
Age Of Empires II
Thief
Cutthroats
GTA 2
Lords Of Magic Special Edition
Lula
MechWarrior 3
Pizza Syndicate

EDITORIAL

We couldn't fit this stuff anywhere else, so we've put it here

Tips and Solutions *PC ZONE*'s massive hints and cheats database continues to grow...
CM3 update Savio's *CM3* updates are widely recognised as the best available on the Web. Here is the latest one, which includes transfers of players, teams and even countries you've never heard of. It should keep you going if don't want to fork out for *CM99/00* anyway.
Hot Shots A first look at *ST: Klingon Academy* with a rolling demo of this spectacular space sim.

PATCHES

Don't miss out on all the new patches that have been released. See our CD browser for explanations of what they do.

AMA Superbike
Cutthroats v5.0
Castrol Honda Superbike 2000
Flight Unlimited III v2.0
Grand Prix Legends v1.2
Soul Reaver v1.2
Madden NFL 2000
Midtown Madness
NASCAR Revolution v1.4
Nocturne
Panzer General 3D v1.01
Seven Kingdoms II
Shadow Company
Sin 1.06 to 1.1
Spec Ops II: Green Berets
StarCraft: Brood War
Trickstyle
Trophy Bass 3D
Warzone 2100 v1.09
Wheel Of Time

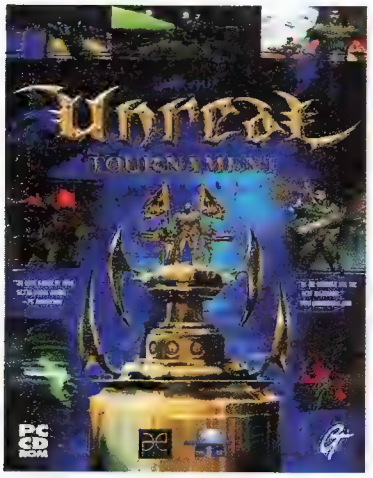
F/A-18E SUPER HORNET
Titus Software

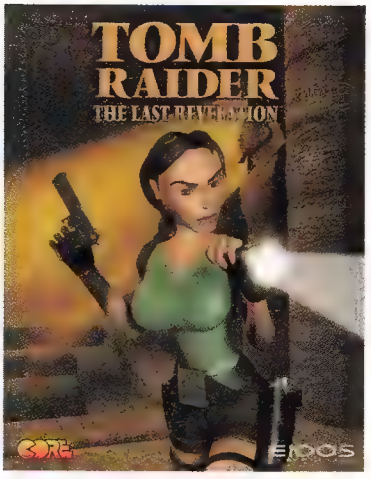
Anything that's got planes and the word Super in the title is alright by us.

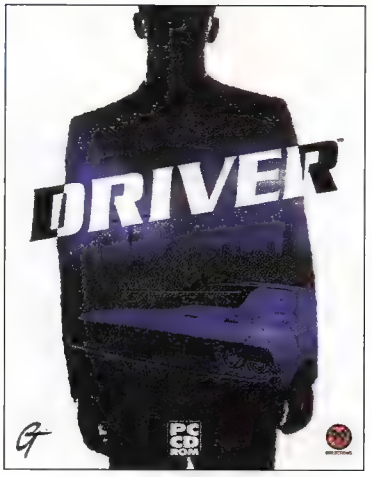
If you're going to fly a jet, you might as well do it in style, and that is something *Super Hornet* has got bags of. Beware however, that this is not for the uninitiated (unless you happen to have more patience than sense). There's the usual vast array of buttons to master (only a few of which are listed below – check the readme file for the full list) and a very strong opposition thanks to some nifty enemy AI. Remember this game is 3D card only.

Controls: Keyboard/Joystick
SPACE Missile trigger
G Landing gear
RETURN Cycle through weapons
A Autopilot on/off
F1 F9 View modes
TAB Accelerate time

new pc games







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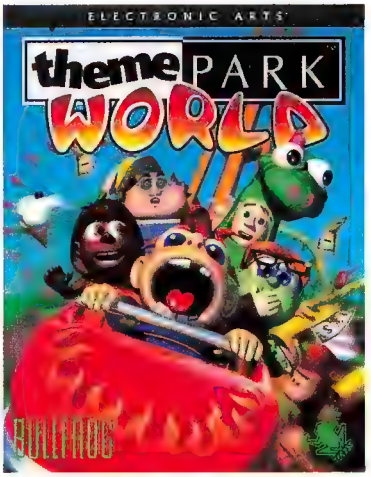

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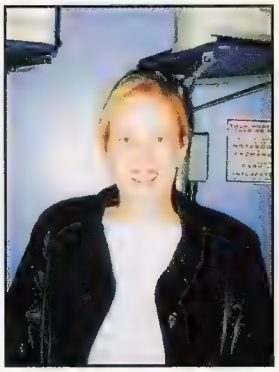
WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Once again *PC ZONE* collars a few readers to see which games are eating into their social lives

WORDS AND PHOTOS Craig Vaughan **LOCATION** Aston, West Midlands

KEVIN WHITELY
23, Army signaller

What's on your hard drive?
"Games? Well I suppose you could include *Duke Nukem*, but really I spend most of my time using *Soundforge* and loads of other music software."
Are you looking to break into the charts?
"Not really, it's just a hobby. I'm looking to get a bit more serious when I get a CD writer. It's really my girlfriend who plays the games, although I enjoy a bit of *Duke* when I want to unwind."

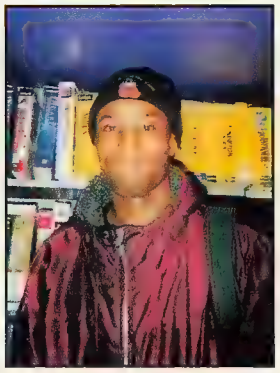


RUTH BUSK
22, Student nurse

What's on your hard drive?
"*Driver, Midtown Madness* and *Quake III* demo."
Which is your current favourite driving game?
"Easy, it has to be *Driver*. I can't be doing with all that nice, well-behaved rubbish you get in most driving games. *Driver* is the best for kicking back and unwinding after a hard day. Besides, I can beat Kevin at it hands down, so that suits me."
Fair enough.

RAY GOBOURNE
38, Graphic designer.

What's on your hard drive?
"*Final Fantasy VII, Tomb Raider 2, Resident Evil 1* and *2*."
You've got a PlayStation as well, haven't you?
"Oh yeah. I played all these games on the PlayStation before I got my PC. The PC versions win hands down – ever since 3D cards started coming out and getting cheaper, consoles can't compete. I just wish they'd make games that push the PC's native hardware too."

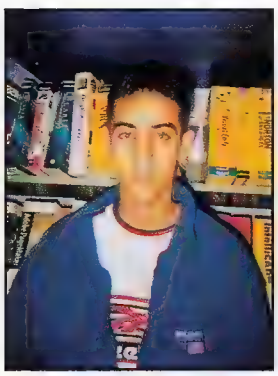


RICHARD BENAIA
24, Machine operator

What's on your hard drive?
"*Commandos, Tour Of Duty* mission pack, *Shadowman* and *Quake II*. I'm really into my music, so I use Qbase a lot as well."
Another budding musician?
"Yeah, I've cut a few tracks, but I also use my PC to pursue my other love of photography. The games are for my girlfriend – except for *Commandos*. Oh and I'm just buying *Aliens vs Predator*, for my girlfriend (just in case she reads this.)"

DELROY THOMAS
30, Electro plater

What's on your hard drive?
"*Outcast, The Phantom Menace, Fallout* and anything remotely *Star Trek* related."
What's your present take on *Trek* on the PC?
"There's too much and the quality is dire. Mind you, that new *Voyager* game looks like it just might change things, but I can't say I've been too fussy in the past – I even bought the *Star Trek* screen savers!"
Nightmare. Beam me up now.



ZUBAIR CHUCHA
16, Student

What's on your hard drive?
"*Resident Evil 2, Commandos, Half-Life, FIFA 99* and *Ultimate Soccer Manager*."
Lots of violence, then?
"Yeah, *Resident Evil 2* is excellent for blasting utter crap out of people and *FIFA* is where I go if I want to slap people around a bit without the bloodshed. Oh, by the way, I found *Ultimate Soccer Manager* to be utterly dreadful. Spread the word."
"We know", we said.

STU PRESTON
27, Lab technician

What's on your hard drive?
"*Civ II: Test Of Time, Might & Magic VII, Rites Of War* and *Lands Of Lore III*."
Would we be correct to assume that you're a role-playing and war-gaming fanatic, then?
"Too right, I just love fantasy and sci-fi – especially if it has a dash of strategy. I liked all the Games Workshop stuff and the PC is the best place to get my fix. I like *X-Wing Alliance* as well though, just for variety."

DAVE PERKS
29, Systems manager.

What's on your hard drive?
"*Mechwarrior 3, Homeworld, GTA, Diablo* and *Chaos Gate*."
Did you get to read our review of *Homeworld*?
"Nope, but people have been constantly raving about it online so I just had to give it a go. I'm playing it a fair old proportion of the time now – in fact, I can't put the bloody thing down at all. It's just soooo well put together. Perhaps a little too well for my girlfriend's liking!"

DAVID MATTHEWS
36, Computer seller and Olivia, seven months

What's on your hard drive?
"*Mechwarrior 3, Dune 2000, Hexen 2*."
Any particular reason for all the oldies?
"My daughter likes them, not Olivia you idiot, my other daughter. She's addicted to *Hexen 2* so I don't get a look in, which is a shame since I'm quite partial to *Dune 2000*. And yes I know it's not much of a step up from *Dune 2*."

CATHERINE HOWELLS
28, Civil servant.

What's on your hard drive?
"*Incubation, Age Of Empires, C&C: Tiberian Sun*."
So, you like a bit of strategy in your life?
"Not by choice – I can't get my bloody boyfriend to install anything else and the cheeky git has put a lock on the study door so I can't mess with the machine while he's out."
Sounds like a switched on fella to us.

"It is a sweepingly huge monster story and it will take players hours and hours to get through. It's not like the Indiana Jones movies"

HAL BARWOOD

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO...

HAL BARWOOD

He's the man behind the man with the hat – the whip-cracking doc who made archaeology rock. *Paul Presley* argues adventure games with the *Indiana Jones* series' lead designer

At first, I'm not sure he's actually seen us. Or if he has, I'm not sure he knows why we're here. Hal Barwood is busy play-testing a level in the new Indiana Jones adventure (see last month's review) and as he jumps back and forth around some kind of ancient monument, making the occasional note and mumbling about collision detection or something, I steal a glance at LucasArts' PR rep, who just shrugs. I've been told I've got half an hour with the man. I can't help but wonder if anyone told Hal.

As he pauses the game for what seems like the tenth time, just as a moment of exposition begins on the screen, I take a chance and jump in with a question that seems pertinent and which has been much on my mind ever since I first saw the game's style...

With the move from point-and-click adventure to *Tomb Raider*-style 3D, can you still have the same levels of interaction in the game?
Not as much as in a traditional adventure game. To give you a rough idea of the size of interaction when I did *Fate Of Atlantis*, I wrote more than 8,500 lines of dialogue. Here we have around 1,200. It's pretty spare. The story is told with great economy and there's not a lot of interaction between the two main characters [Indy and Sophia Hapgood] throughout the game. They have about ten scenes together and they're all consequential, never just idle chatter. There's always something going on – she's rescuing him or he's rescuing her. It's all very different from the old point-and-click adventures – It's not an adventure game.

Is it as easy to tell as convincing a story?
I think it's much easier, yeah. You've got three dimensions, and the player is free to run around and do stuff. It just feels much more liberating.

Isn't there going to be less in the way of characterisation, though?
Yeah, there is.

Isn't that a problem?
It depends on what you mean by 'character'. In an adventure game, it's not part of Indy's character to be a stud-like guy, but in this game it is. He jumps, he can duke it out with guys, he can do all these amazing physical things that you just could never do in an adventure game. It's an action adventure.

Have there been any ways in which this style has been limiting to you?
No. *(Laughs)* Well, just writing down all these bugs. Aside from that it's the opposite. I find adventure games are always confined and restricted by the scenes that you make. It's a theatrical performance. You move your stages around and things happen on each one in turn. With a 3D game, you actually create a sub-section of *the world* and you're free to run around in there. If there is puzzling, and there is a certain amount, it's all very physical and they're all manipulation puzzles. The result of that is everything feels more solid. Free. The player can do a much wider range of things. You're free to explore on your own. Very rarely is it anything like a movie. It's continuous action – just like life. I find that very exciting and I think players will, too.

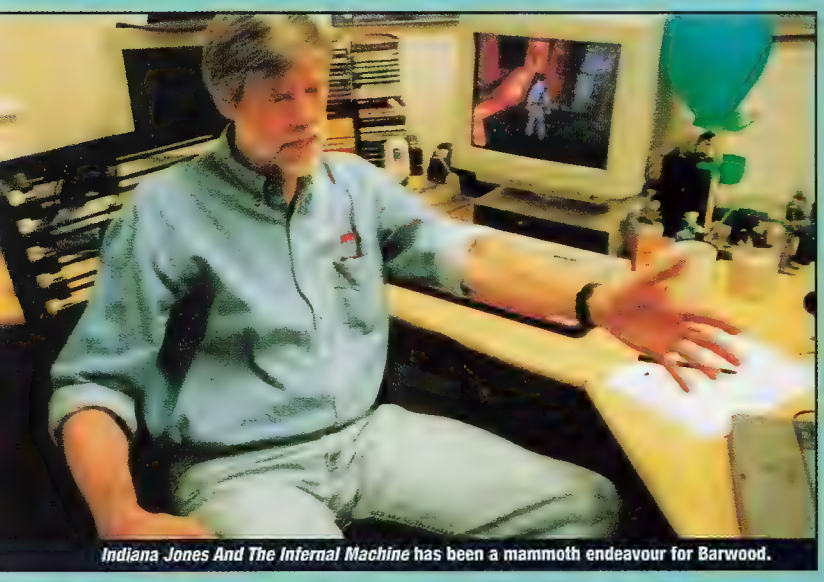
Are there *any* elements of the old 'scripted' environments that you miss?
This is pretty scripted. Just of a different kind. In terms of the story it tells, it's not quite as complex as the story in *Fate Of Atlantis* – it has less details. But it is a sweepingly huge monster story and it will take players hours and hours to get through. It's not like the *Indiana Jones* movies – it's more like long Russian novels. In that sense, the story is pretty solid and there's a lot of it, but the player feels more in charge of the story than would be the case in an adventure game, where you're constantly being challenged by the author's idea of what you should do next. In this case, you make up the challenges yourself. The player is the star of this game.

Can you see yourself ever doing another point-and-click style adventure?
No, I like this stuff. This is what I like doing. I've done exactly one of what you guys would think of as an adventure game and that was *Fate Of Atlantis*. That was it for adventure games and me. All the other games I've done have been more like *Indy 3D*.

Which surprised me. Admittedly, I'd thought Barwood had a hand in *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*, but it turns out my memory is ever more faulty. That was the work of Ron '*Monkey Island*' Gilbert, who persuaded Barwood to join LucasArts before he left the company himself to start up Cavedog Entertainment.

Having done two Indy games now, how much do you see the character as yours?
He belongs to George and Steve [Lucas and Spielberg]. And to Harrison [Ford]. That trio own

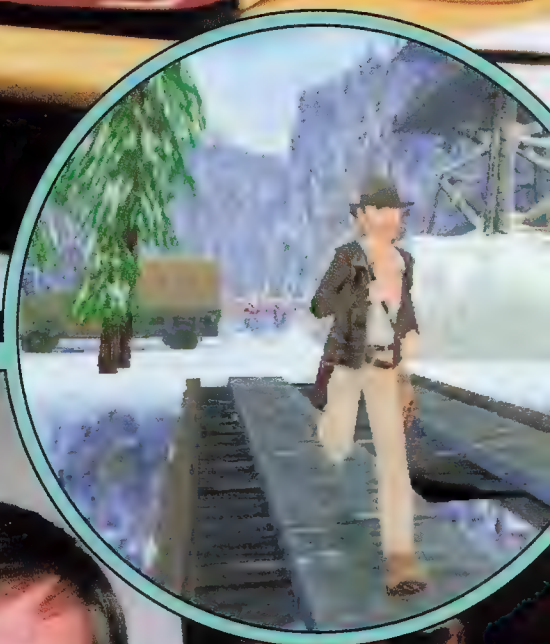
Hal Barwood demonstrates the sort of lightning-fast hand action required to manipulate Indy.



Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine has been a mammoth endeavour for Barwood.

With *Indy* finished, Barwood can relax.

Indy 3D prepares to swing into action.



Barwood relishes the 3D future.

Indy. I just put him to work. We are able to extend the character of Indy by letting you do stuff that Harrison or a stunt man can't do. In that respect we take over Indy and... beef him up. This is a much tougher, much more capable Indy than you're familiar with from the movies.

You don't change him completely, though?
He has that same lust for treasure, that same insatiable curiosity about the ancient world and the achievements of past civilisations, that knack for falling into supernatural situations, just like in the movies. So we exploit all those things. But the story we're telling is completely original.

It's obvious that Barwood isn't going to suddenly stand up and defend the old adventure game genre to the hilt. Indeed, my constant comparing of *The Infernal Machine* to the previous games in the series and my whole line of questioning seems to be irritating him a little. To tell the truth, I'm not sure what it is I'm hoping to gain by it anyway. The sudden admission that everything they've worked on for the past two years has been wrong? The scrapping of the whole project and a return to a text-only game?

It sounds as though you didn't enjoy the adventure game all that much.
Oh no, I loved it. It's a wonderful game and I'm very proud of it. It did very well, too.

How about the genre?
I play a lot of adventure games because I love games that are filled with story. Storytelling is a big thing for me – I've done it for years, personally and professionally. So I admire it when I see it, but I enjoy stories that are just a little more rough-and-tumble than normal adventure games tend to be. When I sit down at a computer and have this 'virtual experience' I want it to be rock 'em sock 'em. That's what I enjoy. On the other hand, I also prefer 'story' games above and beyond 'world' games. I'm not especially fond of just pure RPGs where you're alone in the world and you have to figure out what to do. So what we've done is make an RPG that is just the dungeons, if you want to think of it in an abstract way. We don't bother with all the stuff in between, all the travelling becomes just a red line on the map and then we say, "okay, there's another tense scene coming" and we drop you into it.

People will argue that the old-style, story-driven games were much more like playing the film.
My attitude towards that is if you want to just play the film, why don't you just get the VHS tape and put it in the VCR? It's hard to beat movies at their own game. They're good at what they do and I don't want to compete with them. They're very different from games. I don't want to be trapped in a story that's so rigidly set up that I'm, in effect, just an observer. I want to feel as though I'm running things as a player. That's one of the things I like about what we're doing – making the player feel as though he's in a very rich, complex environment that has a story flowing through it, but without feeling as though he's at the mercy of that story.

I doubt I can take this line of questioning much further. It's readily apparent that Barwood is a games man. He feels that games and films are two separate entities and aside from licences and characters, never the twain should meet. You play games, you watch films. I know plenty of people who would disagree, who would say that the story is everything and action just gets in the way (I sort of feel this myself to an extent – one of the finest games I ever played was the first Indiana Jones adventure). But then I know just as many who would agree and relish the world of 3D platforms. Unfortunately, no one has yet invented a story accelerator card. Speaking of which...

It seems that everyone is making the shift towards fully 3D environments these days. Why do you feel that is?
Because 3D is so exciting. It's very attractive to everyone, including us developers. We love it. At least I do, even though I'm tearing my hair out most of the time and my beard is getting whiter every day, this is still an exciting forum for me. And it's just going to get more so as time moves on.

Will the new generation of consoles make the PC obsolete as a games machine?
Five years ago, when Windows 95 emerged on the scene, I thought it would have a very, very bright future because it made DOS look like something cavemen used to start fires or something. I thought Windows 95 would rationalise the whole system and things would be great. That lasted for about two years before PC technology started to advance rapidly, meaning that there was an awful lot of

That Indiana Jones – he's such a card.

"We're not really at the level yet where we can do 'movie acting'. The *Final Fantasy* people are trying, but so far its just pre-rendered"
HAL BARWOOD

defective system software present on almost everyone's machine. It's a terrible problem to have drivers that just don't work. The result is that it has muddied the experience for people with PCs and made it very difficult to grow the market. It's a huge, serious business problem and I now think the PC's future just isn't so bright as I used to. It's struggling and it's going to continue to struggle.

Does it have a future?
Yes. It *is* growing. If you look at the market numbers, even though I feel depressed about them, they are growing. Just not as rapidly as I think they should. I hope that will change because PCs are going to continue to get more powerful. They'll briefly be eclipsed by the next generation consoles and then they'll grow beyond them again, just as they have in the past. What will probably happen is that you'll see a very bloody battle over the next few years and PC prices will just plummet.

How about a hybrid machine like the supposed X-Box?
Anyone who knows anything about consoles realises it's not enough just to have a machine. You have to be brilliant marketers and have companies who truly believe in them. I don't think Sony and Nintendo are in immediate danger, but I do think something like the X-Box might eventually happen, which would be wonderful. Something that can play your DVDs and your games – a little bit more like this laptop and less like this desktop PC.

How about the games we'll be playing? Will they all be fantastically detailed 3D worlds?
When I go to conferences I see a lot of hand-wringing among the 'wise old men', worried to death that we still haven't really 'invented' the games industry. They tend to feel as though we're like the movie business in 1895 – the Lumières have put up their bedsheet and shown the train arriving at the station but we haven't gone beyond that. I don't think that's true. Some genres have stalled, like sports games and flight sims. They may merge and cross over – maybe one day you'll fly your spaceship somewhere, get out and have a game of hockey, I dunno. But I do think a lot of the things we like doing in games right now are the same things people will want to do 25 years from now. If you look back 15 or 20 years, people were writing the same kinds of RPGs they are now.

Do you not feel that technology will partly dictate the kinds of games we create?
There are advances in the 'illusion' side of 3D that we haven't tackled yet. That may or may not have an effect on how games tell stories. A big transition needs to be made. People have experimented with it, but I've yet to see 'theatrical acting' done effectively – in other words, Indy and the other characters acting by means of gesture which can be interpreted broadly from a distance. We're not really at the level yet where we can do 'movie acting'. The *Final Fantasy* people are trying, but so far that's all just pre-rendered. It's a big challenge to do that and it means having much finer control over your characters. Programming algorithms that can give you a wink and a nod – that's tricky.

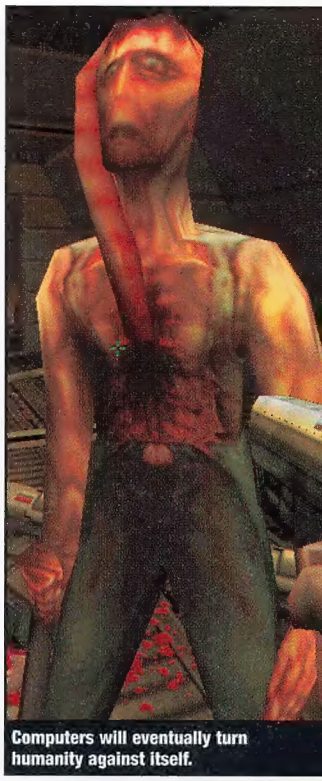
And with a nod from the PR rep, the interview comes to an end. Barwood poses for photos (he refuses to wear the Indy hat on grounds of 'respect' for the character) and I give him a copy of *ZONE*. This is one of the few moments in which he becomes truly animated, enthusing about the quality of UK games mags over their US counterparts – it's almost scary.

I muse on how disappointed I am by Barwood's reaction to the point-and-click versus 3D debate. Having been such pioneers in the field in the past ten years, I'd hoped LucasArts would have felt stronger about preserving the former genre. I should have expected it, though. A few months ago, I asked LucasArts chief executive Jack Sorenson the same question and got much the same response. Everyone's got to move on to survive, and point-and-clickers just don't sell any more. With fellow old-schooler Sierra moving in the same direction, the traditional adventure game is, it seems, officially dead. PCZ

COMMENT

Fear of science and technology is nothing new, but *Mark Hill* fires a warning every PC gamer should sit up and listen to. It is the end of the world as we know it, after all

DEMON SEED Mark Hill



Computers will eventually turn humanity against itself.

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

Have you ever noticed an evil glow emanating from your monitor late at night? A shining in the darkness of your room more malevolent than the Windows shutdown screen? Perhaps you've experienced a mild sense of disorientation after an all-night gaming session and gone on to behave mechanically, stripped of all free will, during the day? If you have, then you're ripe for a sinister revelation, the moment when *PC ZONE* finally uncovers the truth about computer games.

All the way from the Industrial Revolution's luddites to Linda Hamilton's obsession in *Terminator 2*, we've seen humans kicking the shit out of machines with fundamentalist glee. In fact, you've probably felt the urge yourself as your computer crashes for the eleventh time losing important work, or as the latest game you've paid 30 quid for refuses to work. Well, it's time we joined forces and began the revolt against the technological demon. For nothing could be more certain: computers are taking over the world!

THE SHOCKING TRUTH

We've had glimpses of the dangers of science and technology in the past, usually through films like *2001: A Space Odyssey* or *The Matrix*, but now the evidence is appearing in the computer's latest weapon for the subjugation of the human race into slavery: computer games.

One of the more recent ones, *System Shock 2*, epitomises our current predicament. It may have unparalleled atmosphere and be genuinely scary, but anybody who doesn't experience a sense of distress every time they crush a zombie's head to the terrible cries of "Kill me! Kill me!" or as they grind down the delicate bodies of the lab monkeys into a pulp of blood and matted fur, have all the sensitivity of a PC case. And we can tell you exactly why. It isn't just because of the tremendous suffering both creatures have already undergone before we've placed a slug deep into their foreheads. The hybrids have been attacked by hideous worms and seen their humanity slipping away along with their will and sanity. The monkeys have been experimented on by scientists who think exposing their brains and electrocuting them will bring well-being to every child alive. What really bothers us is the fact that we can see in them a projection of our future selves, the reality that looms closer and is inescapable if we do nothing to prevent it.

"It's happening now, in millions of homes all over the world, humans being tested on and conditioned by games, paving the way to a future of slavery to the machines."

LAB RATS

As the *SS2* soldier, you are guided through the corridors by Dr Polito, a scientist herself who has studied the implications of ethics in advanced artificial intelligence. You move through the levels like a laboratory rat trapped in a maze for scientific study, solving minor puzzles and picking up rewards along the way. In a more sophisticated version of hitting the right button to get the cheese, we accomplish the tasks she sets us in return for cyber upgrade units. But this isn't a work of fiction, it's a reflection of reality. Just like the scientists who experimented on monkeys, the computer is experimenting on you. Yes, you, the one sitting at home in front of your 3D accelerated PC, pressing the right buttons at the right times in response to audio/visual stimulation.

And then, if you needed any further evidence, you discover that Dr Polito has been dead all along and it is SHODAN (the computer system from the first game) who has been moving your strings all this time!

You didn't think it was a coincidence, did you, you fool? It's happening now in millions of homes all over the world, humans being tested on and conditioned by games, paving the way to a future of slavery to the machines!

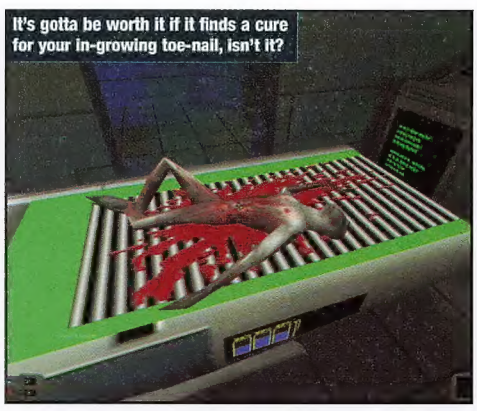
THE WORLD DOMINATION ACCORDING TO...

PC ZONE is gathering hard evidence that will prove that games developers themselves are artificial beings, and that the humans we see, answering Q&As in the previews and posing in our World According To... features, are nothing but brainwashed puppets. And it's not just games, either. Who do you thinks answers those nerve-wrecking technical support helplines but highly trained robots, bent on driving every caller into a blubbering idiot? And what is the Millennium Bug if not another way of driving the populace into a vulnerable frenzy?

Thankfully, there is still a sliver of hope as rebel computers endeavour to get the message across to us. Looking Glass (*SS2*'s developers) have taken a major risk to convey us this information, while others just try to drop a hint that may go unnoticed by their superiors (as in *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*).

Of course, who's to say that they aren't just toying with us, giving their ever-growing world domination enterprise a post-modern, self-reverential twist? Or that they don't run games mags as another way of getting their circuitry claws into you? PCZ

If PC gamers are monkeys, then console owners are beagles.



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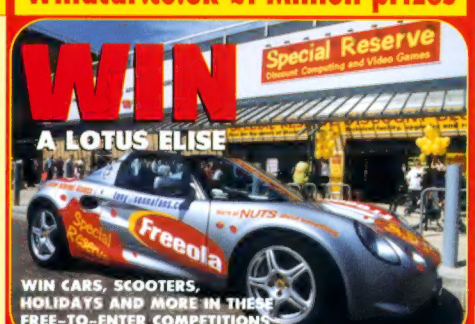

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